

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 6, 2019

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
The United States Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation. It is reassuring that a leader of your vast experience will continue to serve our nation as the head of the Defense Department.

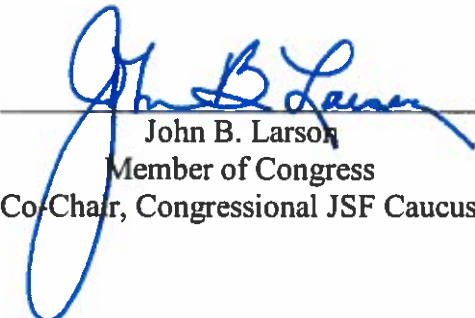
As you formally assume your new duties, we are writing to express our strong support for the 5th generation F-35 Lightning II program. This program is critical not only to the U.S. Services, but it also plays a critical role for the services of many of our international allies also. As such, we would urge you to devote your personal attention to the program and support policies and future defense budgets that properly resource the program.


We believe that this will require the Department's steadfast commitment to increasing annual procurement of F-35s to reach full rate production (80 F-35As, 24 F-35Bs, and 30 F-35Cs for the U.S. Services), investing in a robust modernization program, and growing the partnership with our industrial base to drive down sustainment costs.

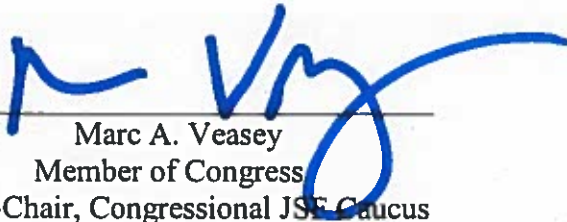
DoD has a validated requirement for 2,456 F-35 aircraft and must procure these aircraft in greater quantities so that the U.S. services have enough F-35s in the coming years to stay ahead of the advancing threat posed by our adversaries. For example, on the current path of 48 F-35A aircraft per year for the United States Air Force, it will take another 33 years to buy the required 1,763 aircraft, which should be an unacceptable answer to recapitalizing our fighter fleet. At this rate, the Department will likely never achieve its validated requirement, nor take advantage of the unused production capacity that currently exists on the F-35 production line.

Accordingly, we invite you to come meet with the Congressional Joint Strike Fighter Caucus to discuss your thoughts on how we can collectively make the F-35 program one of the Department's largest successes. We know that you can provide the leadership necessary to meet this objective and we look forward to working with you on this vital issue in the days ahead.

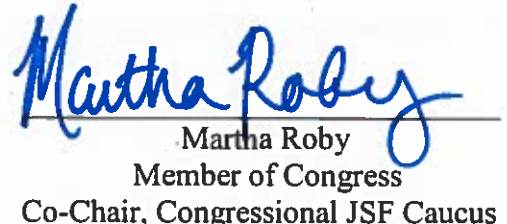
Sincerely,


John B. Larson
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Congressional JSF Caucus


Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Congressional JSF Caucus



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Congressional JSF Caucus



Martha Roby
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Congressional JSF Caucus

CC:

The Honorable Ellen M. Lord, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment
The Honorable Matthew P. Donovan, Acting Secretary of the Air Force