

April 30, 2019

The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin  
Ranking Member  
Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair and Ranking Member:

As former U.S. Flag Officers who have served in times of sequestration and military conflicts, we know the impact cutting costs from vital programs has on defense readiness. With China and Russia aggressively ramping up efforts to improve and modernize weapons, maintaining air superiority is essential to countering emerging threats both at home and abroad. Maintaining a competitive edge in the skies means our military must advance both capacity and capability of our fighter force with continued procurement of the world's most advanced fighter, the F-35 Lightning II.

As the only 5th generation aircraft in production, the F-35 ensures air advantage over emerging peer adversaries through cutting-edge technologies. It is with the nation's security interest in mind that we join the nearly 130 U.S. House and Senate Congressional members to request that the Congress increase the procurement rate of the F-35 within the Fiscal Year 2020 defense authorization and appropriations. It is essential that our Congress does not sacrifice funds from the F-35 program in favor of new 4th generation, legacy fighter programs with little operational relevance in a near peer conflict.

Winning in the modern battlespace requires stealth, advanced sensing capability, coalition interoperability, cyber security and ability to connect in a multi-domain conflict. The F-35 delivers on all these capabilities above and beyond any other fighter in the U.S. inventory or around the globe. It is the most advanced multi-role fighter—delivering unmatched lethality, survivability and connectivity.

Despite a National Defense Strategy (NDS) that calls for competing with near-peer threats, the DoD proposed funding in FY2020 for only 78 F-35's, even though Congress appropriated 93 airplanes last year in FY2019. Additionally, the DoD has proposed funding a legacy, 4th generation aircraft that has limited survivability in a high-end fight today and is equipped with decades old technology. The 4th generation airframe is simply unable to win against near-peer threats, which are the biggest concern to our NDS.

The DoD Fiscal Year 2020 budget request of only 78 airplanes jeopardizes the ramp of the F-35's program production rate and presents a capability gap in our U.S. services that legacy aircraft simply cannot meet. We ask Congress to provide authorization and funding for 60 F-35As (+12), 22 F-35Bs (+12), and 20 F-35Cs in Fiscal Year 2020. This is a total of 102 F-35 aircraft in FY 2020 defense authorization and appropriations bills, which is an increase of 24 aircraft over the President's budget request.

This increase will reestablish the original F-35 production rates that in the past years have been tamped by sequestration era budget caps resulting from the Budget Control Act. The U.S. must start buying the F-35's in larger quantities to reach the minimum 50% of 5th generation fighters in the timeframe required to meet the emerging global threat.

The aircraft is exceeding in performance with the U.S. Marine Corps executing a successful combat mission in Afghanistan with F-35B's, to the Air Force reporting the F-35A reportedly logged a 28:1 kill ratio at the recent Red Flag exercise in Nevada. With the Navy recently declaring Initial Operational Capability, our three U.S. services and numerous ally partner countries are now flying more than 380 aircraft at 17 locations around the world.

To maintain air dominance and further decrease F-35 costs, it is vitally important that we continue to increase our nation's only 5th generation stealth aircraft in production. Our congressional leaders must increase F-35 production and provide the necessary program investments in the upcoming defense authorization and appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2020 to keep the F-35 ahead of our adversaries.

Maintaining the most up-to-date, sophisticated technologies possible is fundamental for our country and allies to address growing threats from Russia and China.

Thank you for your consideration as you begin defense authorization and appropriations process for FY2020.

Sincerely,

T. Michael Moseley  
General, USAF (Ret)  
18th Chief of Staff

Thomas Hayward  
Admiral, USN (Ret)  
21st Chief of Naval Operations

John Jumper  
General, USAF (Ret)  
17th Chief of Staff

Michael Ryan  
General, USAF (Ret)  
16th Chief of Staff

Merrill McPeak  
General, USAF (Ret)  
14th Chief of Staff

James Amos  
General, USMC (Ret)  
35th Commandant of the Marine Corps

Michael Aguilar  
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

Joseph Anderson  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Joseph Ashy  
General, USAF (Ret)

John Baker  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Mark Beesley  
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

Brent Bennitt  
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Harold Blot  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Tom Braaten  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

John Brooks  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Darryl Burke  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Hugh Cameron  
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

John Castellaw  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Mark Clark  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Casey Coane  
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

John D.W. Corley  
General, USAF (Ret)

Granny Amos  
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

David Architzel  
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Dana Atkins  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Michael Basla  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

William Begert  
General, USAF (Ret)

Brian Bishop  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Stanley Bozin  
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

Philip Breedlove  
General, USAF (Ret)

John Bullard  
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

Bobby Butcher  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Henry Canterbury  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Carrol Chandler  
General, USAF (Ret)

Scott Van Cleef  
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

Donald Cook  
General, USAF (Ret)

John Dailey  
General, USMC (Ret)

Terry Dake  
General, USMC (Ret)

Walter Davis  
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Dan Dick  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

David Dunaway  
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Neil Eddins  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Barbara Faulkenberry  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Mark Fitzgerald  
Admiral, USN (Ret)

James Flock  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Ray Fox  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Emerson Gardner  
Lieutenant General, USMC (ret)

Mike Gould  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Chip Gregson  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Blair Hansen  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

David Heinz  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Charles Horner  
General, USAF (Ret)

Jon Davis  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

David Deptula  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Walter Druen  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Michael Dunn  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Marvin Esmond  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Gregory Feest  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Robert Flanagan  
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

H.H. Forsythe  
Major General, USAF (ret)

John Gallinetti  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

John Goodman  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Ken Glueck  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Earl Hailston  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Richard Hawley  
General, USAF (Ret)

Sam Helland  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Jefferson Howell  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

James Hunt  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Gregory Ihde  
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

L.D. Johnston  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Jan-Marc Jouas  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Joseph Kilkenny  
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

William Lake  
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

Daniel Leaf  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

John Michael Loh  
General, USAF (Ret)

Steven Lorenz  
General, USAF (Ret)

James McArthur  
Vice Admiral, Jr., USN (Ret)

Rich Mills  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Carol Mutter  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Robert Natter  
Admiral, USN (Ret)

Andrew O'Donnell, Jr.  
Major General, USMC, (Ret)

Robert Otto  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

James Hyatt  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Kenneth Israel  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Silas Johnson Jr.  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Thomas Kilcline  
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

James Lair  
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

James Latham  
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

Frederick Lewis  
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

William Looney III  
General, USAF (Ret)

Robert Magnus  
General, USMC (Ret)

Fred McCorkle  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Robert Milstead  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Richard Natonski  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Lloyd Newton  
General, USAF (Ret)

Pete Osman  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Chris Owens  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Frank Panter  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

H.D. Polumbo  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Martin Post  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Dave Richwine  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

David Robinson  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Michael Ryan  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Don Shepperd  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Keith Stalder  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Gregg Sturdevant  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Peter Talleri  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Duane Thiessen  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

John Toolan  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Lance Undhjem  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Loyd Utterback  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Randall West  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Chip Parker  
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

Robert Polumbo  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Douglas Raaberg  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Gene Renuart  
General, USAF (Ret)

Terry Robling  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Robert Schmidle  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

John Simmons  
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

Denby Starling, II  
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Larry Stutzriem  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Larry Taylor  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Steven Tomaszeski  
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

George Trautman III  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Jerry Unruh  
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Tome Walters  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

John Wissler  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Harry Wyatt  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Ron Yates  
General, USAF (Ret)