

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0302

April 22, 2015

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith,

We write to urge you to sustain the A-10 Warthog in the Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act. The decision by the Administration to divest the A-10 is, by their own admission, a budget-driven decision that will create a capability gap in the Close Air Support (CAS) and Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) missions. The end result of this capability gap is a greater danger to American ground troops because they will not have optimal air support.

The A-10 provides unmatched CAS capability, delivering firepower to save American lives when they are under fire in close proximity to enemy forces. It can operate in rugged environments at all altitudes and under weather ceilings or with low visibility. The A-10 offers a combination of long loiter time, lethality, survivability, and the ability to strike moving targets in a complex visual fight. No other aircraft, existing or in development, matches these capabilities. In an April 14th subcommittee hearing, Director for Operational Test and Evaluation Michael Gilmore confirmed that the A-10, when compared to fighter jets currently in development, has a longer loiter time, is more survivable, and better able to conduct CAS in close proximity while taking small arms fire.

The A-10 also uniquely provides critical Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) capabilities, absolutely vital to ensure downed pilots do not meet the same fate as the Jordanian pilot who was captured and lit on fire by ISIS.

Cutting back a one-of-a-kind capability with no clear replacement is an example of a budget-based strategy, not the strategy-based budget we need to meet our defense needs. In a March 17th hearing, Secretary of the Air Force Deborah James and Chief of Staff of the Air Force General Mark Welsh both confirmed that mothballing the A-10 was driven by budget constraints only. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter reiterated that the decision was budget-driven in a March 18th hearing, as did Lieutenant General James Holmes, USAF, in a March 26th hearing.

A-10s are currently deployed to the Middle East for CSAR and offensive operations in the fight against ISIS. They are also deployed to Europe to reassure and train our allies in CAS in the face of increased Russian aggression. A-10s are also stationed in South Korea as a critical part of our

deterrence and anti-armor capability against potential North Korean aggression, due to each aircraft being able to carry 1174 armor-piercing depleted uranium 30mm rounds. In a HASC hearing on April 15th, the commander for U.S. Forces Korea, General Curtis Scaparrotti admitted that the loss of the A-10s in Korea would result in a “gap” in anti-armor capabilities.

Over the past several Congresses, the committee has successfully protected the A-10 fleet from complete divestment, but the equivalent of four squadrons have been mothballed since 2012. Over \$1 billion has been invested recently in the A-10 to upgrade its avionics and strengthen its wings, extending its lifespan until 2028. However, the President’s Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2016 again directs the Air Force to divest the entire A-10 Fleet, starting with 160 aircraft in FY 16. This divestiture, particularly because of a lack of a similarly-capable replacement platform, puts Americans’ lives at risk.

We recognize the challenges imposed by sequestration, but we believe that the A-10 Warthog should be sustained until a suitable replacement exists.

Sincerely,


MARTHA McSALLY
Member of Congress


ROBERT BRADY
Member of Congress


TRENT FRANKS
Member of Congress


JOE WILSON
Member of Congress


WALTER JONES
Member of Congress


AUSTIN SCOTT
Member of Congress


ELISE STEFANIK
Member of Congress