



Air Force Association

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An Independent Nonprofit Aerospace Organization

Michael M. Dunn

President/CEO

10 July 2009

The Honorable Carl Levin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Levin,

I am writing in support of continued F-22 acquisition in the FY 2010 budget. The F-22 affords numerous capabilities that will be essential for decades into the future. While many question the necessity of the aircraft based on the current threat environments in Iraq and Afghanistan, I would suggest that the procurement decisions made in FY 2010 regarding this program should not solely focus on today's wars. Accurately predicting future threats is a difficult endeavor and one in which the United States has a poor track record. The Congress and the administration have an obligation not only to fully and successfully prosecute today's wars, but also to vigorously work to deter the possible wars of tomorrow. In this, it is critical that we balance risk in a prudent and responsible fashion. This means fulfilling the Air Force's stated "moderate-risk" requirement for 243 F-22s. The current, 186-fighter program, by contrast, can only be called "high risk."

A few short months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Army Air Force Major General Hap Arnold and Colonel Ira Eaker declared in their book, *Winged Warfare*, that "when diplomacy breaks down, when international negotiation has failed, when war comes, it is inevitable that the first units to be joined in battle will be the air units." Arnold and Eaker were right. Air assets were some of the first elements deployed in World War II, and this pattern has held true in every subsequent conflict in which America has participated. The reason for this is simple—the United States Air Force is able to execute critical missions anywhere, anytime. Whether deterring potential adversaries, striking strategic targets, gathering critical intelligence, delivering humanitarian relief supplies, evacuating wounded, enabling command and control, or providing close air support, the Air Force is an invaluable partner for the joint team. However, these core competencies cannot be taken for granted and are dependent on one fundamental condition—air dominance.

The vast majority of air superiority aircraft in the Air Force inventory are no longer survivable in contested airspace. The rapid proliferation of advanced surface-to-air missiles and other anti-access technology is limiting when and where the vast majority of Air Force aircraft can operate. During last year's conflict in Georgia, the F-22 was the only fighter aircraft in the Department of Defense inventory that could have penetrated the defended airspace and have a chance of

surviving. We should not assume that the air dominance we currently enjoy over Iraq and Afghanistan will be as easily attained and maintained in other regions around the world.

History is filled with examples that clearly illustrate what happens when our forces are unable to secure and control the sky. During the Second World War, the 8th Air Force lost over 10,000 aircraft and 30,000 airmen. A few years later, the US Air Force struggled to deploy sufficient numbers of fighters to secure the skies over Korea. Cold War air defense requirements in the United States and Europe stretched the force thin, and at one point during the summer of 1951, the Air Force was only able to field 89 F-86s in Korea against nearly 400 MiG 15s. Air superiority was far from guaranteed during this period, and operations often ground to a halt because of the risk posed by enemy aircraft. During the next decade, air defenses over Vietnam proved deadly on countless occasions. Over half the F-105s ever built were shot down in combat and the type was withdrawn from service in 1971 because too few existed in the inventory to support a sustainable rotation base. In the final days of Vietnam, the Air Force lost 15 B-52s in 12 days during Operation Linebacker II. Many of these instances can be attributed to leadership decisions where individuals assumed that the United States was not going to fight certain types of wars. They were wrong and airmen, along with members of the joint team, paid the price with their lives.

After Vietnam, leaders in the United States realized the value of air dominance and invested substantial sums in aircraft such as the F-15 and F-16. To say these platforms have been successful is an understatement. They deterred the Soviet Union during the last decade of the Cold War and enabled successful US operations in Desert Storm, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the initial days of OEF and OIF. In fact, these aircraft have been so successful that many now take air dominance for granted. However, we must not become complacent. Procuring the full military requirement of 243 F-22s is an essential step in ensuring that America's air dominance is not successfully challenged in the future. The global threat environment is becoming increasingly dangerous and the unique capabilities fielded by the F-22 will be essential in enabling successful US combat operations for years to come.

As history has clearly proven on multiple occasions, the only thing more expensive than a first rate Air Force is a second rate Air Force.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael M. Dunn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Michael M. Dunn
President/CEO