

**Statement of Senator Orrin G. Hatch
Before the United States Senate
On the
F-22A Raptor
July 16, 2009**

SEN. HATCH. Mr. President, though I have been an active participant in the Judiciary Committee's Sotomayor confirmation hearings, I have followed with great interest the floor debate on continuing the production of the F-22A Raptor.

Unfortunately, over the years I have heard a number of incorrect assertions made about this aircraft, and I have tried to correct them. But after listening to this week's debate and reading misleading articles, especially in the *Washington Post*, about the F-22's performance and capabilities, I believe the Raptor's opponents have hit bottom – and have begun to dig.

Therefore, I would like to set the record straight about the F-22 and its extraordinary war-winning capabilities.

Fact number one: The F-22 is, and will continue to be, the pre-eminent fighter/bomber for the next 40 years.

The F-22 is the stealthiest aircraft flying today. Unlike the recently retired F-117 Nighthawk and the B-2 bomber, of which we only have 20, the F-22s can be deployed on stealth flight operations not just at night, but 24 hours a day. This one-of-a-kind capability provides our combatant commanders with unprecedented flexibility to engage ground and air targets at a time of their choosing – thus denying any respite to the enemy.

The Raptor is equipped with supercruise engines that are unique because they do not need to go to after-burner to achieve supersonic flight. This provides the F-22 with a strategic advantage by enabling supersonic speeds to be maintained for a far greater length of time. By comparison, all other fighters require their engines to go to after-burner to achieve supersonic speeds, thus consuming a tremendous amount of fuel and greatly limiting their range.

The F-22 is the deadliest fighter flying today. During a recent military exercise in Alaska, the Raptor dispatched 144 adversaries versus the loss of only one aircraft.

Further advantage resides in the F-22's radar and avionics. When entering hostile airspace, the F-22's sensor-fused avionics can detect and engage enemy aircraft and surface threats far before an enemy can hope to engage the F-22. At the same time, its advanced sensors enable the F-22 to be a forward-surveillance platform capable of gathering crucial intelligence on the enemy.

Often overlooked, the F-22 is a very capable bomber. It can carry two GPS-guided, 1,000-pound Joint Direct Attack Munition bombs or eight small-diameter bombers.

Fact number two: The F-22 is not a Cold War dinosaur. It is designed to meet and eliminate the threats of today and tomorrow.

As the longest-serving member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I know full well the greatest air threat of today and tomorrow is, and will continue to be, the advanced integrated air defense system.

Such a system is composed of two parts. The first component is advanced surface-to-air missile systems such as the Russian-made S-300. The second are highly maneuverable and sophisticated fighters like the Su-30, which have been sold to China and India. Coupled together, these anti-access systems make penetrating hostile airspace extremely difficult, if not deadly, for those aircraft lacking the F-22's advanced stealth technology and sustained supersonic speeds made possible by its supercruise engine. It is also important to remember the mainstays of our aerial fleet – the F-15, F-16 and F/A-18 – are not stealth aircraft and are not equipped with supercruise engines.

Unfortunately, integrated air defense systems are relatively inexpensive, placing them within the purchasing potential of nations like Iran with its seeming insistence on developing nuclear weapons.

The advanced integrated air defense system is exactly the threat the F-22 was designed to neutralize. In addition, the F-22 will almost simultaneously be able to turn its attention to other ground targets that threaten the national security of the U.S. and our allies.

In a related argument, some argue the United States should devote more of its military resources toward bolstering its counterinsurgency capabilities.

This is a fair point. Unwisely, the United States did permit its counterinsurgency capabilities to atrophy after the Vietnam War. As events in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown, we continue to pay dearly for that error. However, as we reconstitute our ability to successfully prosecute counterinsurgency campaigns, we cannot make a similar mistake and undermine one of the fundamental foundations of our military strength: hegemony in the air.

Even Defense Secretary Robert Gates said this January, "Our military must be prepared for a full spectrum of operations, including the type of combat we're facing in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as large scale threats that we face from places like North Korea and Iran." I could not agree more, and the aircraft that will enable our nation to decisively defeat our adversaries in the air is the F-22.

Mr. President, others point out the F-22 has not been deployed in support of our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is true. However, there were recent plans to deploy the F-22 to the Persian Gulf. But according to the July 9, 2008 edition of the widely respected *Defense News*, the Pentagon overruled those plans, citing concerns about "strategic dislocation." This means the F-22 is hardly a dinosaur. It is a weapon that can change the balance of power in a region and deter our adversaries.

Fact number three: 187 F-22s is an insufficient number to meet the minimum requirements of our National Military Strategy.

Mr. President, our nation's military requirements are decided upon in detailed studies of the threats our nation and its allies confront. These studies also recommend force structures to deter and, if necessary, defeat threats to our national security. Accordingly, the Department of Defense and the Air Force have conducted a number of studies to determine how many F-22s are required to meet our National Military Strategy.

I am unaware of any comprehensive study that has concluded F-22 production should cease at 187 aircraft. Specifically, unclassified excerpts from the Air Force's Sustaining Air Dominance Study stated "180 F-22s was not enough,"

and the Department of Defense's TACAIR Optimization study concluded the procurement of additional Raptors "was the best option." On April 16, these conclusions were reinforced by comments made by General Norton A. Schwartz, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, after the F-22 procurement termination was announced. General Schwartz stated "243 [Raptors] is the military requirement."

Opponents of the Raptor will most likely dispute this, pointing to comments made by General Cartwright during his July 9 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. During his testimony the General stated the decision to terminate production of the F-22 is supported by a "study in the Joint Staff that we just completed and partnered with the Air Force." However, my staff has inquired about this study and was informed a recently completed comprehensive, analytic study does not exist.

No doubt, the Joint Staff has prepared some justification for F-22 termination. Yet I believe it is only natural to question the objectivity of any assessment which justifies previously reached decisions.

Unfortunately yesterday, Mr. President, my suspicions about this so-called analysis were proven correct when Geoffrey Morrell, the Pentagon's Press Secretary stated General Cartwright was referring to "not so much a study [as a] work product."

Therefore, I believe the Congress should place great significance on the June 9 letter by General John Corley, the Commander of Air Combat Command, who stated "at Air Combat Command we have a need for 381 F-22s to deliver a tailored package of air superiority to our Combatant Commanders and provide a potent, globally arrayed, asymmetric deterrent against potential adversaries. In my opinion, a fleet of 187 F-22s puts execution of our current national military strategy at high risk in the near to mid-term. To my knowledge, there are no studies that demonstrate 187 F-22s are adequate to support our national military strategy."

Mr. President, I believe these are important words from the four-star general who is responsible for the Air Force Command which is the primary provider of combat airpower to America's war-fighting commands.

Fact number four: The *Washington Post* article that alleged technical and maintenance difficulties of the F-22 was misleading and inaccurate.

In fact, Mr. President, the Air Force has written two rebuttals to this article. After viewing the first rebuttal, I found it striking the Air Force stated six of the points made in the article were false, four were misleading and two were not true.

Specifically, the primary assertion made by the *Post* was the F-22 cost far more per hour to fly than the aircraft it is replacing, the F-15. However, this is misleading. Only when you include all of the one-time costs that are associated with new a military aircraft is this true. A far more accurate measurement is to compare variable flying hours. The F-22 costs \$19,750 per hour to fly versus \$17,465 for the F-15. The F-15 costs less to fly, but the 1960s-designed F-15 does not have nearly the capabilities of the F-22.

The article asserts the F-22 has only a 55 percent availability rate for "guarding U.S. airspace." This is misleading. Overall, the F-22s boasts a 70 percent availability rate, and that has been increasing every year over the past four years.

Finally, the article states the F-22 requires significant maintenance. This is true. But the *Post* article misses the critical point: the F-22 is a stealth aircraft. Making an aircraft disappear from radar is not accomplished through magic. It is achieved through precise preparation and exacting attention to detail.

I believe we can all agree it is far better to expend man hours to prepare an airplane that will win wars than to buy replacement aircraft after they have been shot down – not to mention the moral cost of not exposing our pilots to unnecessary dangers.

Fact number five: The F-22's detractors argue erroneously that the Raptor's role can be filled by the F-35, also known as the Joint Strike Fighter. But the Raptor and the Joint Strike Fighter were designed to complement each other, not be substituted for each other. The F-22 is the NASCAR racer of this air-dominance team. Fast and unseen, the Raptor will punch a hole in an enemy's defenses, quickly dispatching any challenger in the air and striking at the most important ground targets. The Joint Strike Fighter is the rugged SUV of the team. Impressive, but not as maneuverable or capable of sustained supersonic speeds, the F-35 will exploit the hole opened by the F-22 and attack additional targets and directly support our ground forces. This is not to say the F-35 is not a highly capable stealthy aircraft. But the F-35's role is to supplement the F-22, not substitute for it. Only by utilizing the strengths of both aircraft do we ensure air dominance for the next forty years.

Fact number six: Our allies recognize the critical capabilities of the F-22 and are eager to purchase the aircraft.

This is one of the most compelling reasons for purchasing additional numbers of F-22s. The Japanese and Australian governments have consistently approached our government about purchasing the Raptor for themselves. If the F-22 is such a boondoggle, why would these nations be willing to spend billions of dollars to purchase them. Australia already plans to purchase up to 100 F-35s. Why does it need the Raptor? Perhaps it is because these nations realize a number of the threats to their security can only be defeated using the F-22 Raptor.

Mr. President, in conclusion, we have an opportunity to ensure this and future generations continue to benefit from one of the foundations of our national security: the ability to defeat any air threat and strike any target anywhere in the world. The world is changing; threats are growing. Today we have an opportunity to ensure those air threats are met. I hope my colleagues will join me and vote against the Levin–McCain Amendment.