

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 19, 2013

Honorable Eric Fanning
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington DC 20330-1670

General Mark A. Welsh III
Air Force Chief of Staff
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Fanning, General Welsh:

We write to express our deep concern regarding recent reports that the United States Air Force is considering divesting itself of the A-10 Thunderbolt II in the near future. We are opposed to any effort by the Air Force to deprive Combatant Commanders of a combat platform that provides a critical capability.

The A-10 Thunderbolt, as you know very well, is unsurpassed in its ability to provide close-air combat support for service members on the ground. In Operation Desert Storm, the A-10 was responsible for the destruction of 4,000 military vehicles and artillery pieces. In Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the A-10 has performed nearly one third of the combat sorties. In addition to close air support, the A-10 has also assisted in combat search and rescue operations, escorting helicopters and assets in and out of combat zones.

The A-10 has provided the Air Force with decades of exemplary service and with a new retrofit of the airframe's wing and electronics package, the A-10 can continue its close air support mission for decades to come. National security and the protection of our service members in combat areas must be paramount as we consider the needs of the Department of Defense. To deprive itself of such a combat-proven workhorse such as the A-10 would be a mistake and adversely impact the ability of the Air Force to support the warfighter on the ground.

As we continue the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan, we can ill afford to repeat past mistakes. The Department of Defense must maintain its ability to wage ground combat and support those at the tip of the spear. We believe divesting the Air Force of the A-10 at this point would deprive the Department of this capability. We request that you provide the proposed funding decisions for the A-10 Thunderbolt II program objective memorandum (POM) and the proposed future guidance and allocation of the airframe.

Sincerely,



RON BARBER
Member of Congress



CANDICE S. MILLER
Member of Congress


JACK KINGSTON
Member of Congress

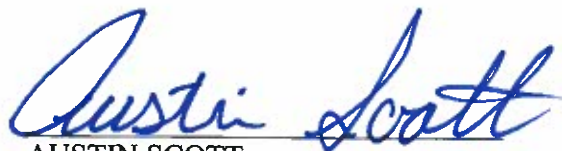

C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER
Member of Congress


VICKY HARTZLER
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