

Testimony of Representative Ted Lieu (D-CA)
Member of Congress
33rd Congressional District of California
Before the House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
April 15, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee, I want to thank you for the tireless work and effort that you and your staff put forward to ensure that our Nation remains safe. As a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force Reserves who previously served on active duty, I have firsthand experience with the support this Subcommittee provides to our men and women in uniform.

I want to particularly thank the Subcommittee's work on aerospace and space issues. As the representative for California's 33rd Congressional District, I work in both military and civilian capacities with Los Angeles Air Force Base and its Space and Missile Systems Center, which is tasked with researching, developing, acquiring and launching our country's military space systems. Surrounding the base is a unique and incredible array of institutions and companies focused on space and aerospace, ranging from the federally-funded research and development center Aerospace Corporation to world-class universities. Together, they have driven the growth of one of the largest hubs of aerospace industry in the country, employing thousands of technical workers, PhDs, and manufacturers, and producing more engineering graduates than any other region in the country. Adjacent to the base is the production line for the F/A-18 fuselage, which is the program I am here to testify about today.

I would like to add my strong support for the F/A-18 program as you consider the Fiscal Year 2016 defense appropriations bill. This program has an estimated annual economic impact of

\$1 billion throughout California, 40 percent of which occurs in my district, with 274 vendors and suppliers and thousands of employees. From a national security perspective, the program is at a critical pivot point as the Navy considers its warfighting requirements and the strength of its aviation fleet.

As you know, the F/A-18 program has provided the United States Navy with two unique and essential aircraft for our Nation's warfighter, the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler. The Super Hornet remains the Navy's premier operational strike fighter, flying from forward deployed aircraft carriers. These aircraft flew the first missions against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and they serve as the workhorse of naval aviation for all missions, and all threat environments. With a plan to be part of the fleet into 2040, the Super Hornet is a key component of the Navy's aviation plans for the next three decades.

Additionally, the Growler is the Department of Defense's proven airborne electronic attack asset, providing jamming not just for the Navy, but all the services. We are in a time when control of the electromagnetic spectrum is a key discriminator in battle. The Growler is truly a national asset and the Department's only resource for airborne electronic attack. Today, the Department is finalizing a study that could indicate the need for a greater requirement of Growler aircraft in order to prosecute missions of the future in highly contested environments.

Unfortunately, the Fiscal Year 2016 budget does not include funding for continued production of either the Super Hornet or Growler. After the budget submission, the Navy added 12 "F Model" Super Hornets to its unfunded priority request, highlighting that it does not have a sufficient amount of aircraft in its inventory.

The most immediate challenge is that the F/A-18 confronts the difficult decision to keep open or close its production line may need to close without aircraft in FY16. The Subcommittee

must weigh many factors as it crafts its budget, but if F/A-18 aircraft are not added this year, the Navy may not have the ability to address its shortfall in future years. The Nation would also be left with a single tactical aircraft manufacturer, eliminating competition that has driven efficiency and innovation in aviation, and negatively affecting 60,000 workers that contribute to the F/A-18 program, including many in my own home State of California.

This Subcommittee has been incredibly responsive to the needs of the warfighter. From procurement of the best weapons to funding health programs that affect the lives of countless members of our military and their families, the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee looks beyond the budget documents and always considers what is best for the women and men in uniform. I ask that you once again take that approach. Please consider the Navy's unfunded priority this year of an additional 12 F/A-18 aircraft.

Once again, I thank the Subcommittee for its work, and your time today. I look forward to working with you to ensure that our Nation retains the strongest military in the world, and that our servicemen and women have the finest resources available.

Thank you.