

Testimony of the Honorable Mike Bost
Before the Subcommittee on Defense
House Committee on Appropriations
March 15, 2016

Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Smith:

Thank you for inviting me to testify today in support of those programs and activities that will help protect our servicemen and women, and which will in turn help protect our nation. There are two program areas I intend to discuss today.

First, I would like to discuss the Navy's needs for additional F/A-18 Super Hornet Strike Fighters. The F/A-18 is currently the only operational strike fighter for the United States Navy (USN). These aircraft are conducting daily combat missions in support of operations against ISIS and other al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist groups in the Middle East.

However, the pace of operations is significantly wearing out existing aircraft. While the Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act and the Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations Act funded the acquisition of 12 much needed aircraft, this number may still be short of USN needs.

According to previous testimony by the USN, operational tempos are causing many aircraft to prematurely reach the end of their useful lives. The consequence is a deficit of between 24 to 36 combat-ready aircraft. Without the procurement of additional fighters, these shortfalls may grow.

The procurement of additional F/A-18 Super Hornets is critical to meeting the anticipated needs of the USN and to maintaining the viability of the St. Louis region defense industrial base, especially as the United States prepares F/A-18 Super Hornet aircraft to allied nations.

Therefore, I encourage the Committee fund the USN's request for 14 aircraft for the upcoming Fiscal Year.

In addition, aircraft and other weapons systems need ammunition to take the fight to the enemy. The General Dynamics plant in Marion, Illinois manufacturers a variety of medium-caliber rounds used in weapons systems by all four services.

Many of these munitions are highly-advanced and represent the next generation of force projection and force protection technology. Examples include the 30 mm K.E. ship defense munition, capable of penetrating waves and other obstructions to protect ships from swarm attacks by small boats, and the 20 mm Point Detonating round, capable of penetrating soft targets before detonation.

Each of these rounds will help protect our servicemen and women and allow them to defeat the growing use of asymmetric tactics favored by our enemies. Therefore, I urge the Committee to fully fund the service's medium caliber round requests.

Again, thank you for allowing me to appear today. I am ready to answer any questions from the Committee.