

**Testimony to the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee**

**March 15, 2016**

***Congressman Wm. Lacy Clay (D) Missouri***

**Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member  
Visclosky, and Honorable Members of the  
Subcommittee;**

**Thank you for allowing me to come  
before you today to highlight a pressing  
national security concern....closing the  
U.S. Navy's tactical aviation gap.**

**The United States Navy provides our  
military with rapid, effective and highly  
flexible force projection throughout the  
world.**

**Its carriers, ships, and battle groups are  
often first to respond to international  
crises.**

**And the “tip of the spear” of these forces are the Navy’s carrier-based squadrons of tactical warplanes.**

**Key among these aircraft is the F/A-18 Super Hornet.**

**This year, before this Subcommittee:**

**The Secretary of the Navy and Chief of Naval Operations testified that there is an urgent need for additional Super Hornets.**

**This year’s budget takes steps to help reduce the Navy’s tactical aviation gap – (3 squadrons of Super Hornets) –**

**But it isn’t quite enough to meet the high operational demands on tactical aviation.**

**And that is why the Navy has identified, as its number one “unfunded priority” adding 14 additional Super Hornets to help close that shortfall.**

**This request anticipates that the Navy will follow through on its promise to add aircraft next year and beyond.**

**I’m extremely proud to represent the thousands of highly-skilled, hard working men and women in North St. Louis County who build the Super Hornet, and many other vital programs that support our brave men and women in uniform.**

**These workers are part of America’s absolutely vital national, skilled manufacturing base,**

**Without which;**

**We would be unable to defend freedom, both for our homeland, and for our allies as well.**

**In St. Louis, we have a long, proud history of providing our military aviators with the finest warplanes ever produced.**

**Generations of my constituents have helped defend freedom by applying their skills, dedication and talent around the clock to safeguard our national security.**

**In his appearance in front of the Senate,**

**Secretary Mabus said that it is imperative to keep this F/A-18 manufacturing line open, both to close the Navy's tactical aviation gap...and to maintain this vital program for our allies who plan to place**

**additional orders for this exceptionally capable and cost-effective aircraft.**

**This year's budget makes difficult decisions, and your Subcommittee has the challenge of looking closely at that spending plan.**

**You have always been responsive to putting the needs of our nation's warfighters first.**

**I respectfully request that that you give favorable consideration to the Navy's unfunded request and add 14 F/A-18E/F Super Hornets to the President's Budget to address the pressing tactical aviation gap.**

**I look forward to working with you  
throughout the year on this critical  
national security issue.  
Thank you very much.**