

Statement of Rep. Martha McSally (AZ-02)

Before the House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Defense

March 15, 2016

Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Visclosky, Members of the Committee: Thank you for inviting me here today.

I would like to open by asking for your continued support for the A-10 Warthog. I was an A-10 pilot and commanded the 354th Fighter Squadron at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona. I flew over 300 combat hours in the A-10, and I can tell you firsthand that when American troops are fighting close to the enemy, or if a pilot needs to be rescued behind enemy lines, there is no better sound overhead than the A-10.

Only the A-10 has the lethality, loiter time, and survivability to provide premier Close Air Support, Combat Search and Rescue Capabilities, and Forward Air Control-Airborne for the Air Force. We have already put the equivalent of 4 squadrons in the boneyard over the last few years, and we should not retire one more A-10 until we have a legitimate replacement. The Pentagon's Director of Operational Test and Evaluation is planning to include comparative testing of the A-10 head to head with the F-35A for these important mission sets in approximately Fiscal Year 2018. Therefore, it is prudent to not mothball any more A-10s until that testing is complete and an independent party certifies to Congress that the F-35A can replace the unique capabilities of the Warthog. Until the F-35A achieves Full Operating Capability and is tested and certified to replace all of the A-10s unique capabilities without increasing risk to our troops, we request full funding for the A-10 fleet. This support includes finishing the wing enhancements. We have purchased 173 Enhanced Wing Assemblies for the fleet of 283 aircraft, but only 106 have been installed. I ask your support to finish re-winging the fleet, which allow the A-10 to fly past 2028. That would also give the Air Force time to present Congress with a long-term plan, whether that's to re-engine the current fleet or to field a next-generation replacement.

I would also like to share my support for some Tomahawk, SM-3, and Joint-Air-to-Ground—or JAGM--missiles. We are using the Tomahawk right now against ISIS. The SM-3 is the most tested, and most successful, missile defense system we have. JAGM will be the next generation standoff weapon for the joint force, replacing the TOW, Hellfire, and Maverick. Our Tomahawk stockpiles are running low after a prolonged battle against ISIS, and we must plan ahead to make sure we have these missiles when we need them. Even though we don't have enough missiles, the President has tried to buy even fewer new missiles at a higher cost per missile. This poor planning is not the best way to manage our limited defense budget. The Tomahawk, SM-3, and JAGM are critical to our national security, whether attacking ISIS or providing state-of-the-art missile defense. I ask that you fully fund these important missile systems.

I'd like to address electronic warfare, or EW. Every combatant commander and service chief has told us that they need to continue to grow their EW capability and capacity. I ask for your support as the services work together in this area, which requires strategic change. Our near-peer competitors have also been investing in EW, and we must keep our advantage by investing in more electronic capabilities like improved airborne electronic attack, avionics, and radar. I ask your support for all necessary research-and-development, testing, and procurement of advanced electronic warfare capabilities.

Last, I want to address opportunities to grow the nation's capability and capacity with Remotely Piloted Aircraft, or RPAs. RPAs have value both at home and abroad. Domestic agencies use them to fight fires, patrol our borders, and catch human and drug traffickers. The nation uses RPAs abroad for ISR, or in the fight against violent extremists. I recently toured Libby Airfield at Fort Huachuca, in my district in Arizona. Fort Huachuca is the largest trainer of RPA pilots in the world, and boasts a strong working relationship with other federal partners, such as Customs and Border Protection. We must continue to develop RPA capability and capacity to meet the growing global need. I ask for

you to fully fund the RPA missions and allow us to leverage an asset like Fort Huachuca.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony to the Subcommittee today. These issues are very important to myself and my district, and I appreciate your attention to these requests.