

Representative Ted Lieu (CA-33)
Testimony to the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee (HAC-D)
March 9, 2017

Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Visclosky, and Members of the Subcommittee and staff, thank you for having me here today to talk about the Navy's strike fighter shortfall.

As this Subcommittee knows, the Navy's strike fighter shortfall is an issue that Congress has taken the lead on for the last two years. You have generously funded additional tactical aviation – both F/A-18 Super Hornets and F-35s – that address one of the service's biggest challenges. However, the magnitude of the Navy's shortfall is so large that single-year solutions are not the ultimate answer, instead requiring ongoing, long-term procurement and modernization of the current fleet. I'm hopeful that the Fiscal Year 2018 budget request will demonstrate the Navy's sustained commitment to addressing tactical aviation.

The Super Hornet is the Navy's workhorse off its aircraft carriers throughout the world. However, even though it has been operational since the early 2000s, the aircraft was originally designed with the foresight to upgrade its capabilities to meet emerging requirements and threats. The Fiscal Year 2018 budget should support the introduction of the Block III Super Hornet to the fleet. The Block III Super Hornet will be based on the same airframe as the current Block II aircraft that is the Navy's most lethal strike fighter. But the new features will make it relevant well into the 2040s. Those capabilities include increased range, networking capability with other Navy aircraft, longer-range sensors to identify the enemy from farther away, new cockpits, and improved stealth. Block III Super Hornets offer cost effective ways to complement F-35, EA-18G and E-2D as they operate together in the air wing.

As you may know, California's 33rd District is a critical hub for aerospace design, engineering and manufacturing. I work in both military and civilian capacities with Los Angeles Air Force Base, which is surrounded by 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. Nearby the base, some of the largest components of the Super Hornet are built by the hard working men and women of my district, including the fuselage and components of the radars. So the continuation of Super Hornet production is not only vital for the warfighter, but it sustains manufacturing for a proud and incredibly skilled workforce.

I understand that you have a number of interests to consider as you review the Fiscal Year 2018 budget. I believe, however, that the Super Hornet is vital to addressing the Navy's strike fighter shortfall. The Navy's request should include these aircraft, and I ask that the Subcommittee support them in its markup.

Thank you very much for your past support, and for the work that you are doing for the men and women in uniform. Your work is critical to our national security.