

Statement of Rep. Martha McSally (AZ-02)

Before the House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Defense

March 9, 2017

Chairwoman Granger, 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 in complex firefights in close proximity 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 support, and Forward Air Control-Airborne capabilities 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.

There are only four active duty and five guard/reserve A-10 units left in the Air Force inventory, and each squadron has fewer airplanes than before. A-10s remain stationed in S. Korea ready to provide critical anti-armor capability and they are currently kicking ass against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. For the first time since the A-10 was created, we have no assets stationed in NATO's theater, so they are also rotationally deploying as a key part of the European Reassurance Initiative during a time of increased Russian aggression. Last year, A-10s also deployed to the Philippines to enhance U.S. military assets in the region performing operations such as air and maritime domain awareness, personnel recovery, combating piracy, and assuring that all nations have freedom of navigation and flight. Due to the Warthog's unique criticality in all these theaters, the FY16 and FY17 NDAA and DoD appropriations bills kept the fleet at 283 aircraft minimum.

The FY17 NDAA also required a side by side comparative test of the F-35 and the A-10 in Close Air Support and Combat Search and Rescue. Now let me be clear, as an Airman, I am a strong advocate of the F-35 and the crucial 5<sup>th</sup> generation fighter capabilities it brings to our military and Allies. But I believe we should not require the F-35 to replace the niche capabilities of the A-10. Our Air Force desperately needs both. Until we have a tested replacement for all of the A-10's unique capabilities without increasing risk to our troops, I 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, and are on track to complete the installation this year. My amendment passed in the original House version of the DoD appropriations bill for \$100m to begin re-winging the remaining 110 aircraft in the fleet. The FY17 defense appropriations bill we passed out of the House yesterday contains \$20 million for this purpose, which I think is a good step towards preserving the fleet. I ask your support to finish re-winging the fleet, which allows the entire A-10 fleet to fly well into the 2030s. That would also give the Air Force time to present Congress with a long-term plan for its attack mission, whether that's to sustain and continually modernize the current fleet or to field a next-generation replacement.

I would also like to share my support for Tomahawk, AMRAAM, and SM-3 missiles. These missiles are developed in my district and are critical for national and homeland defense. When I was running counter terrorism ops in Africa, Tomahawk missiles were our most flexible responsive option for attacks where intelligence often comes together in a fleeting window. They are also typically the first weapon fired in major combat operations. Our Tomahawk stockpiles are running low in the continuing battle against ISIS, and we must plan ahead to make sure we have these missiles when we need them. Our inventory of AMRAAM, our premier air-to-air missile, is short of the Department's inventory objective. The SM-3 is the most tested, and most successful, missile defense system we have. The Tomahawk, AMRAAM, and SM-

3 are critical to our national security in an uncertain time, 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 they need to continue to grow their EW capability and capacity. I ask for your support as the services work together in this area. 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. Fort Huachuca, in my district, has taken proactive steps at the state and federal level to ensure pristine EW testing and training conditions to further our EW capabilities and speed fielding of new technology and equipment. I ask your support for all necessary research-and-development, testing, and procurement of advanced electronic warfare capabilities.

Finally, 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 Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance, and in the fight against violent extremists. 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 a national security 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.