

Testimony of Congressman Steve Knight
California's 25th Congressional District
Before the
Subcommittee on Defense
House Committee on Appropriations
March 9, 2017

Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member Visclosky – thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I am here to speak about the importance of the Air Force's new long-range strike bomber, the B-21 Raider.

The ability to project power anywhere in the world is a cornerstone of our national security strategy. For decades, our military has enjoyed this advantage. However, as our potential adversaries rapidly improve their military forces, we must modernize our military technology to maintain our strength.

Most of our current fleet of long-range strike bombers are over 50 years old and cannot penetrate advanced defenses. Thankfully, work is underway to build a new bomber. The Air Force's B-21 Raider will be the world's most advanced long-range strike bomber when it fields in the mid-2020s. It also offers noteworthy cost-effective advantages over older fighter aircraft: it carries larger payloads, requires fewer aircraft, and puts fewer men and women in harm's way to accomplish a mission.

The Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Goldfein expressed the need for the B-21 when he stated "In the short term, we prefer to have more penetrating long range capacity to ensure persistent air operations in long range scenarios. For this reason, the B-21 is an operational imperative, and we must ensure it remains an affordable program in order to augment and eventually replace our legacy bomber fleet."

I could not agree more with the General's comments and it is apparent that many of my colleagues here in the House feel the same way.

As you might recall, last year a bipartisan group of 28 Members wrote to this committee to voice support for the B-21 program and encourage the committee to provide sufficient funding to keep the program on track so it is ready when we need it. With your permission, I ask that letter be placed in the record.

I am encouraged by the committee's support for modernizing our nuclear deterrence capability, including the B-21. As you well know, we must ensure our military is never in a fair fight, and the B-21 will do that by enabling our military leaders to strike anywhere, at any time.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today and I hope you will continue to support this important program and ensure it remains on track.