

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4401

April 9, 2024

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

As a former member of this Committee, I'm honored to have the opportunity to testify on this year's defense priorities for the First District of Utah and the over 28,000 uniformed and civilian airmen of Hill Air Force Base who I represent in Congress. Because it has the rare privilege of being both an operational active-duty installation with combat ready F-35 aircraft while also hosting a major civilian workforce, Hill Air Force Base serves multiple mission sets that will be crucial to the warfighter during a potential peer conflict scenario in the Indo-Pacific.

As more F-35s become operational, opening more hanger space in the Ogden Air Logistics Complex at Hill to maintain these fighters will be critical to the future of U.S. air superiority. However, critical resources, technical expertise, and man-hours are pulled away from the F-35 program every day to maintain legacy aircraft such as the A-10 that do not fit modern-day operational relevance. I've worked with committee members and staff on base text language that would require the Air Force to go through an annual briefing exercise to determine where A-10 divestiture delays are occurring, their strategy for maintaining an aggressive timeline, and how to transition civilian maintainers towards the F-35 program.

However, organic depot performance is also driven by access to talent. I remain deeply concerned about the DOD's inability to hire qualified and skilled military members shortly after they retire, and how this impacts the overall readiness of our armed forces. I've supported language both on and off the Armed Services Committee that would repeal the existing 180-day waiting period that a military retiree must complete until he or she can enter a civilian job at the DOD – and today I'd like to again emphasize how important this change is as this Committee drafts and considers our next NDAA. At a time when our depots, arsenals, and shipyards struggle to keep up with the brutally competitive hiring environments of the private sector, the federal government needs access to candidates who possess active security clearances and the specialized skills required to support our national security priorities.

Hill Air Force Base and all of Utah is honored to be the home of the 388th Fighter Wing, the Air Force's first combat-coded fifth generation fighter unit. When I speak to the leadership at Hill, they remind me that F-35 aircraft have not consistently been accompanied by equally modern fifth-generation weaponry and sensory equipment, which could gravely impact national security in a conflict scenario. I look forward to working with members of this committee to include language in the NDAA that would require the Air Force to develop an annual service-

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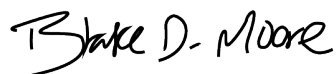
wide planning initiative to quickly implement fifth generation weapons into the F-35 program and a strategy for any needed policy changes to accomplish this.

Additionally, Hill Air Force Base and surrounding defense partners are rightfully proud of their work developing the LGM-35A Sentinel program, which will replace our aging Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles and bring nearly 4000 jobs to northern Utah. Utahns know that the foundation of strategic deterrence and the protection of the American homeland is a credible nuclear force, which is why supporting the Sentinel program remains so crucial given the unstable geopolitical environment we find ourselves in. I remain a steadfast advocate for the program and look forward to working with committee members to ensure its delivery.

Lastly, I would be remiss not to mention the major quality of life challenges currently facing military servicemembers in my district. Fueled by pandemic population shifts and DOD programs at Hill, housing costs in Northern Utah have exploded - rising by 27% in 2021 alone. At the same time, the MILCON backlog and military dormitory crisis remains a preeminent issue, meaning that lower enlisted airmen are being forced off base to seek housing they cannot afford. I've worked with committee members to craft language requiring the Comptroller General of the United States to assess alternative locality pay formulations that more appropriately reflect changes in cost of living, cost of housing, and other factors impacting civilian and uniformed servicemembers of the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to working with your team on securing these priorities in this year's National Defense Authorization Act.

Sincerely,



Representative Blake Moore
Member of Congress