

WASHINGTON, DC - Yesterday, following a Senate vote to eliminate funding for the F-22 fighter plane from the defense authorization bill, Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) issued the following statement:

"I applaud the Senate for this commitment to fiscal sanity. As I've said before, there are simply more appropriate, more urgent ways to spend \$1.75 billion than on twelve additional unrequested fighter planes that don't match the needs of our soldiers or the demands of our current battles. We have brave men and women risking their lives on the frontlines every day, and families waiting for them hoping not to lose their jobs or homes. The taxpayers and the troops deserve for us to spend money wisely, and I'm encouraged that the Senate agrees."

Earlier this week, Cong. Quigley penned an editorial on the same topic. The text can be viewed at the bottom of this page.

The Senate voted 58-40 to adopt the amendment - S. 1469 - that struck the aircraft funding from the 2010 defense authorization bill (S 1390).

U.S. Doesn't Need Even More F-22s

By U.S. Representative Mike Quigley

New threats call for new strategy. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have taught us that the weapons of the Cold War are not well suited to the asymmetric challenges our nation faces around the world.

But the recent defense authorization bill to come out of the House of Representatives suggests that some haven't learned that lesson. It allocates funding for twelve F-22 fighter jets beyond what was requested by President Obama and the Department of Defense. These twelve unrequested jets, costing \$140 million each, come on top of the 187 F-22s already provided for in the bill, which is now before the Senate. President Obama is so concerned by the inclusion of the unrequested F-22s that he has issued a preemptive veto threat.

Deciding whether to support funding for the extra twelve F-22s rests on two very simple questions: Are they necessary in the defense of our national security? Are there better options out there?

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who served under both President Bush and President Obama, has been a vocal opponent of the F-22 and called for an end to the program's funding. Gates has highlighted his opposition to the extra F-22s, stating that "there is no military requirement for numbers of F-22s beyond the 187" and that the idea of not buying twelve extra F-22s imperils our national security is "completely nonsense." He also observes that "we are fighting two wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the F-22 has not performed a single mission in either theater."

Secretary Gates realizes that the F-22, a fighter jet designed for air-to-air combat against "near-peers" like China or Russia, is terribly unsuited to contemporary combat operations against non-traditional targets like small or failed states and terrorist groups. The 187 F-22s we're already paying for are enough.

By cutting the extra twelve F-22s, just think what the approximately \$1.75 billion saved could provide for our troops. We could invest in body armor, armored tanks, and low-tech equipment such as unmanned drones that are effective in Iraq and Afghanistan and keep our soldiers out of harm's way. We must always remember that every defense dollar spent to build more F-22s is a dollar we can't spend in more vulnerable areas.

But the costs don't stop at building the jets. The Department of Defense says that the hourly cost of flying the F-22 exceeds \$50,000, almost 167% of hourly operating costs for the F-22's predecessor, the F-15. Apparently the F-22's radar-absorbing metallic skin is vulnerable to rain, and the jet as a whole requires 33.8 hours of maintenance for every hour of flight time.

Is the F-22, acknowledged by Secretary Gates to be a niche solution to an unlikely combat scenario, worthy of this enormous investment? The answer is clearly no. We have to overcome institutional inertia, stop spending more, and start spending smarter.

As former President Eisenhower said, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those

who are cold and are not clothed.”

Of course we need guns and warships and rockets; our military is vital to the defense of our homeland and provides the safety and security that we enjoy. We are far and away the most superior air force in the world. But that doesn't mean we should pour billions more into an area that we already dominate and continue to support an aircraft that isn't suited to our strategic needs and current battlefields. Cutting these twelve F-22s out of the budget won't make us any less safe, but we might be safer if we spend the money on more prudent projects.

Our taxpayers and our brave troops on the frontlines deserve it.

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