

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 8, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We are writing to express grave concern with your administration's plans to retire a vital national security asset, the A-10 Thunderbolt II, also known as the "Warthog."

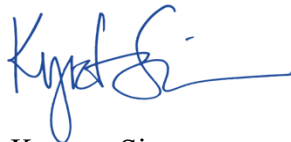
Currently, the A-10 is the only Air Force platform that can provide adequate and reliable close air support to our troops on the ground. Having seen the Air Force's plans to retire numerous airframes, Congress required a "fly-off" assessment designed to examine whether another aircraft could provide the protection on which our ground troops rely in combat. Although that requirement was enacted with the FY17 NDAA, this analysis has not yet been provided to Congress, making the sweeping retirements proposed premature. Without a viable replacement, we are concerned retirements of any A-10 aircraft would leave a severe capability gap within our military.

In addition to its exceptional, combat-proven performance, the A-10's operational cost is just 20% of what is required to operationally maintain the Air Force's proposed alternative for close air support, the F-35. Yet, for FY21, the Air Force has spent only \$15.6 million of \$100 million (15%) of funds requested and appropriated to sustain the A-10 fleet into the 2030s. With the F-35's ability to provide close air support as yet unproven, and the fact that the Air Force has already invested millions of dollars to keep the A-10 flying through the next decade, it would be financially irresponsible to consider mothballing any portion of the fleet at this time.

As you are aware, Arizona is home to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, which has supported A-10 pilot training since the platform was first adopted, and today hosts the largest contingent of A-10s in the country. Arizona is recognized as an international leader in training pilots and offers unparalleled access to range space and flying time. However, in the proposed FY22 budget, the Air Force would begin a consolidation plan that would result in net reductions of 35 A-10 aircraft and 632 personnel at the base. This proposed cut must be reconsidered.

While we support the Administration's modernization goals, we cannot support the premature retirement of one of our most vital military assets, which could in turn put the lives of service members at unnecessary risk. The A-10 has proven its usefulness in combat time and time again, and we look forward to working with you to ensure this vital national security platform remains part of our arsenal.

Sincerely,



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Anne Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress