Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 20, 2015

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter:

As members of the House of Representatives, serving on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense or Armed Services Committee, we write to request an update on the status of the recapitalization of the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) program.

The current JSTARS platform, the E-8C, is the premier Battle Management, Command and Control (BMC2), Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) weapon system and remains in high operational demand. As an already high-demand, low-density military asset, we cannot afford to lose the JSTARS's BMC2/ISR unparalleled capability. However, the legacy fleet is rapidly approaching the end of its service life. Even now, on average, only half of the remaining fleet of 16 are operational at any given time due to the required maintenance on aging aircraft.

JSTARS has flown well over 100,000 combat hours in support of recent contingencies, reinforcing the importance of its mission for Combatant Commanders world-wide. The direct benefit and advantage this platform provides our maneuver commanders when conducting combat operations should be a clear indication of the importance of ensuring a smooth and timely recapitalization of JSTARS. Replacing the existing fleet with Next Generation aircraft is essential, which is why we want to ensure that the critical mission performed by the JSTARS Team is not jeopardized by a lengthy acquisition process.

In fiscal year 2015, the Department of Defense's budget proposed a JSTARS recapitalization plan, based on an Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) conducted in 2011, that supported Combatant Commander (COCOM) requirements by integrating mature and proven technologies in an affordable platform. The plan provided improved capabilities to the warfighter while reducing operating costs. Congress, recognizing the importance of a timely transition to the Next Generation aircraft, supported the plan and provided appropriate funding to the Air Force to initiate recapitalization of the fleet.

Since that time, however, the acquisition plan for JSTARS recapitalization has been significantly lengthened and now includes a technology maturation/risk reduction phase for a program that is intended to be an integration of mature, proven capabilities. We understand

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Initial Operational Capability (IOC) will be delayed two years and Full Operational Capability (FOC) will be delayed by at least four years. Given the importance of this mission, a timely, affordable acquisition process is needed to ensure this high demand capability is ready for our warfighters.

While the system is primarily operated by the Air Force, all branches of the military and many in the intelligence community rely and depend on the platform for a collection of information only JSTARS has the capability to provide. With no manned or unmanned comparable system, JSTARS unmatched Ground Moving Target Indicator (GMTI) modes and tactical C2 platform bring a vital capability to "Find, Fix and Track" mobile land and sea targets, which enables our forces to maximize mission success.

As members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense and Armed Services Committee, it is our responsibility to ensure our Defense programs are providing the most effective, cost efficient solutions to meet the needs of our military. Therefore, we ask for an update on the JSTARS recapitalization program, including a detailed review of the acquisition and funding strategy, before the end of December.

Sincerely,

Tom Graves

Austin Scott

Kay Granger

Rob A Brady

Joe Wilson

J Randy Forbes

Rob Wittman

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger

Rick Crawford

Walter B. Jones

Frank A. Lobiondo

John Kline

Doug Lamborn

Hard Johnson

Bill Shuster

Jackie Walorski

Elise M. Stefanik

Jeff Miller

Steve Russell

Jim Langevin

Madeleine Z Bordallo

Tim Ryan

Joe Courtney

CPG

Vicky Hartzler

Ken Calvert

Jim Bridenstine

Nancy Kaptur

Robert Aderholt

John Carter

Steve Womack

Pete Aguilar

John Garamendi

Paul Cook

Mo Brooks