

**International  
Association of  
Machinists and  
Aerospace Workers**



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OFFICE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

November 29, 2022

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

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of 600,000 active and retired members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), the largest defense and aerospace union in the United States, I am writing to urge you to increase production rates for our U.S. Services in the FY24 budget request for the F-35 program to secure our national security and maintain good-paying, union jobs.

It was a major disappointment for the IAM to see only 61 F-35 aircraft requested in the FY23 proposed budget with outyear production rates (FY24-FY27) falling well short of the F-35 aircraft required to stay ahead of the advancing threats facing our nation. If enacted with only 61 aircraft in the FY23 appropriations bills, the F-35 program could see major perturbations in the production line caused by a 30% reduction in rate.

Machinists Union members working on the F-35 program across the country are the best in the world at what they do. With their finely tuned skills and expertise, they build the most advanced fighter aircraft the world has ever known. As a nation, we must continue to invest in this program in order to stabilize the production line, support this indispensable workforce, shore up the supply chain and bolster our national defense industrial base.

The F-35 program is a national imperative which provides for hundreds of thousands of high-quality jobs, powers economic growth and bolsters America's global standing with our allies. Today, the F-35 serves as a deterrent to Russia in Eastern Europe and continues to prove itself in combat every day. Deterring a conflict with either Russia or China requires a robust, modern air force. The F-35 is the cornerstone of our fighter fleet, but we must invest in additional F-35 aircraft for the program to effectively serve as the integrated deterrent for the US and our allies.

The highly skilled men and women of the IAM have heroically worked through the pandemic to continue building the F-35, keeping our military service members and our allies around the globe safe. Machinists Union members working throughout the F-35 program truly exemplify what 'Made in America' means. Continued investment in the F-35 program, and the Machinists Union members who make it all possible, is an investment in not only our national security, but our economic security as well.

The Machinists Union and our members are committed to the F-35 program and to the men and women in uniform who rely on this peerless aircraft; however, our members cannot adequately support the program without funding for a minimum of 86 F-35 aircraft a year for our U.S. Services. This minimum number of aircraft is absolutely necessary to keep our workforce intact and our production lines firing on all cylinders.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Brown called the F-35 “the cornerstone of our [tactical aircraft] capability and for our fighter capability.” We need to now ensure the DoD follows thru with funding and budgeting that supports that commitment.

A recent non-partisan Mitchell Institute report states that the United States Air Force (USAF) has the oldest, smallest, and least ready force in its history due to 30 years of chronic underfunding. The report makes the case for a rapid buildup of at least 100 fighters per year for the USAF alone. It further states that the Air Force budget makes the U.S. and allies vulnerable to losing the China fight.

The United States must lead, and our union workforce is ready to support full rate production numbers for this critical aircraft program. With our current economic headwinds, cutting the F-35 program or holding the program to low rates of production would create needless disruption to our defense industrial base and its workforce. We need consistent, strong investment in the F-35 to support our critical defense industrial base.

The current, DoD 5 Year Defense Plan, if unchecked, will result in job reductions across the program, a slower economic recovery and weakened defense industrial base. Our national security depends on a strong F-35 program built by American workers. As the largest defense and aerospace union in the U.S., the IAM is highly concerned with falling F-35 procurement rates in recent years. Any F-35 procurement rate below 86 aircraft for the US Services could result in significant job reductions throughout the program and a degradation of the national defense industrial base.

The easiest way to support this highly skilled union workforce and invest in our national defense industrial base is to invest in the largest defense program (and only active 5<sup>th</sup> gen production line) – the F-35 program.

For more information and to continue this important conversation, please contact IAM National Political and Legislative Director Hasan Solomon at (202) 420-5902 or [hsolomon@iamaw.org](mailto:hsolomon@iamaw.org).

Thank you,



Robert Martinez, Jr.  
International President