

**International  
Association of  
Machinists and  
Aerospace Workers**



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OFFICE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

April 15, 2024

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Frank Kendall III  
Secretary of the Air Force  
U.S. Air Force  
1690 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretaries Austin and Kendall:

On behalf of more than 600,000 members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), I write to express my strong opposition to the planned retirement of the U-2 fleet by Fiscal Year 2026. The IAM requests that you reconsider this plan to prematurely retire the U-2 fleet. The current retirement schedule would cost nearly 400 Machinist Union members to lose their jobs, dramatically reduce department support and sustainment capacity by disbanding this highly-skilled highly-valuable workforce, and create a potential gap in Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Targeting (ISR-T) capabilities for the U.S. Air Force.

The IAM proudly represents approximately 1,500 highly-skilled workers at Lockheed Martin in Palmdale, CA. If the planned schedule to retire the U-2 is adhered to, nearly 400 of these workers who provide Program Depot Maintenance, Support and Sustainment, and Modernization services to the U-2 program will be laid off in the coming months. This mass layoff will have severe negative impacts on these workers, their families, and the Palmdale community and region. Additionally, it is our understanding that there are no current programs at the facility with the available capacity to transition these nearly 400 workers into. This means that the skills, knowledge and abilities of this workforce will be lost; an inefficient tragedy in a world where skilled workforces and the value they represent would be forever lost.

To disassemble this highly-skilled workforce would be an unretractable mistake. In addition, it is our understanding that the U-2 program continues to provide vital ISR-T capabilities to the U.S. Airforce. Furthermore, the current schedule for retirement of the U-2 appears to be unnecessarily rapid and could result in a gap in the peerless ISR-T capability of the U.S. Air Force.

For the sake of these high-skilled high-quality jobs, the sustainment and modification capacity of the U.S. Department of Defense, and the ISR-T capabilities of the U.S. Air Force; I strongly urge you to reconsider the planned rapid U-2 retirement schedule.

To discuss, please contact IAM National Legislative and Political Director Hasan Solomon at 202-420-5902 or [hsolomon@iamaw.org](mailto:hsolomon@iamaw.org).

Sincerely,

Brian Bryant  
IAM International President