

**Testimony of  
Representative Adam Kinzinger  
11<sup>th</sup> District, Illinois**

**Testimony from Members on their National Defense Priorities for the  
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (NDAA)**

**Before the  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**April 14, 2011**

Good morning Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee on Armed Services. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to outline a couple issues that I believe need greater scrutiny during the negotiation of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012.

As some of you may know, before I was elected to Congress I served as a pilot in the Air National Guard, Air Force Special Ops, Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command. This experience has given me a unique bottom-up perspective on the needs and desires of every day airmen in the Air National Guard and Air Force. I am a strong supporter of the military and ensuring that our military is the best equipped in the world; however, we must make tough decisions with regard to military needs and military wants. Given the difficult budget environment we are in, we must make difficult decisions on how to best prioritize spending the taxpayer's money.

**Air Force development of new flight suit.** One program which I believe is not currently needed by the Air Force is the development of a new flight suit for aircrew. On November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the Air Force Times noted that the Air Force was spending nearly \$100 million over seven years to “research, develop and manufacture” a new flight suit.<sup>1</sup>

This project has been dubbed the “Integrated Aircrew Ensemble,” and seeks to address flying ensembles which have developed over time based on pilot needs to fly fighter jets, bombers, helicopters and transport planes. It is important to note that this new flight suit is not being developed in response to specific needs of the F-35, rather it is designed integrate the already existing protections which currently exist the today's flight suit in a more integrated system. While the goal of increased comfort and integrated protection for the pilot is laudable, I don't believe that this is this is urgently needed by the Air Force, particularly in this budget environment.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2010/11/air-force-new-flight-suit-112610w/>

Two improvements over that current system which are mentioned in support of the new flight suit include: (i) an improved anti-G suit and (ii) long-term cost savings in a new integrated model. Both claims should be examined closely by Members of this Committee. I personally know that the current anti-G suit provides protection for pilots up to 9 and half Gs. If a new anti-G suit is needed, we should look into addressing that problem individually. Moreover, I'm skeptical regarding claims that spending money to develop a new flight suit to replace a working flight suit will save money in the long term for the American taxpayer.

**RC26: Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.** A cost-effective asset which addresses our homeland security and ISR capabilities is contained in the RC26 aircraft. During my career as a pilot, I have had the opportunity to fly the RC26, both domestically and internationally, on various missions.

The RC26 is based on the Fairchild C-26 Metroliner and is located at 11 Air Guard units. Originally conceived to be solely a platform for counterdrug operations, its unique capabilities have made it an asset in South America and southwest Asia. Unfortunately, due to its unique capabilities, the aircraft has become over-deployed and operates on patchwork funding and under constant threat of elimination due to base consolidations. Such a consolidation and resulting impact on the RC26 would be a significant loss for our homeland security and defense capabilities.

Domestically, missions are unique to each local Air National Guard unit. For example, I have personally flown many missions responsible for taking large amounts of drugs off our streets. In addition, my unit, located in Madison, WI, has the capability to setup overhead homeland security support by providing real time imagery throughout the Midwest. These types of domestic missions have a real impact for our homeland defense or counter drug intelligence.

Rumors now abound that the RC26 will be deployed to yet another theater, which I can't elaborate about in this setting. The men and women of this platform are happy to do it and proud to serve their country, but have constantly lived under threat of loss of funding, consolidation, or orders being taken away. It is high time that the RC26 get the proper credit due from Congress, the Air Force, and the Air National Guard and have a committed source of funding for its operations. The RC26 needs to be recognized for the benefits it provides to our local communities and should take a preeminent role in the defense of our nation.

**Lockheed Martin F-35 rollout plan.** I am concerned with the rollout plan the Air Force has developed for the F35. I believe the Air Force needs to reassess the level of experience the Air National Guard brings to the fighter community, and consider an increased role by the Air National Guard in carrying out its mission of symmetric warfare.