

Congressman André Carson
House Committee on Armed Services Testimony
Thursday, April 14, 2011

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, thank you for this opportunity to testify today on the upcoming FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act.

As you may know, my Indianapolis congressional district is home to the largest Rolls Royce plant outside of the United Kingdom and is the headquarters for their Defense North America operation. Our engine plant employs over 4,000 people on a range of programs including the F136 alternate engine, the vertical lift fan for the F-35, and engines for the V-22 Osprey and C-130. This plant employs highly skilled workers, including hundreds of engineers and scientists—the types of stable, well-paying jobs that support the Central Indiana economy.

On behalf of my constituents I want to begin by thanking the Chairman, the Ranking Member and many of members of this committee for their continual support for the F136.

The alternate engine program has taken a major blow in the 112th Congress. The House voted to defund the program in H.R. 1 and no funding is included in the CR we will vote on today. However, as we begin the authorization and appropriations process with just six months left in this fiscal year, this debate is not over. I ask the committee to authorize the F136 and at least allow this discussion to continue until both the House and Senate can definitively continue or cancel the program.

In this debate, many of us have taken into account our parochial interest in the program. I do not want to downplay at all how important the continuation of the alternate engine is to my constituents—it's critical. But over the next several months all of us, whether we have a plant in our district or not, are going to be asked to vote on defense authorization and appropriations bills that will significantly impact our national defense and national debt.

The discussion about whether or not to kill the alternate engine emerged after nearly a decade of staunch bipartisan support in Congress and the White House. Since then, we have all heard about how the Pratt and Whitney engine was only chosen upon the selection of the Lockheed Martin version of the Joint Strike Fighter. We all know that no real competition ever took place. And we have all heard about the risk to our national security that arises from settling on a single engine model. Over 90% of our fighter fleet could be grounded from just a small engine malfunction. Every member of this committee is familiar with these arguments.

I just want to focus on a few aspects of the F136 that I believe have been overshadowed by the intense rhetoric surrounding the program.

This is not just a debate about two engines or the relative cost of funding one program versus two. This is a debate about a fighter jet that is going to replace over 90% of our fighter force. The debate centers on how our decisions surrounding the transition will dictate the future of our defense industry and defense spending over the next several decades.

Opponents frequently point to the fact that many of our fighter aircraft operate on only one engine. They also point to the current market share of GE versus Pratt and Whitney. These would be excellent points—if we were not talking about **90% of our fighter force**.

As this committee is well aware, many of our fighter platforms will be phased out over the next several years. We are going to see fewer platforms that operate on a sole-source engine and fewer that operate on GE engines. The dynamic of military is changing and during this transition it is unreasonable to determine the future of the F136 by focusing on a force structure that will soon no longer exist. The facts are simple—the F-35 will make up over 90% of our fighter force and without the F136, Pratt and Whitney will be responsible for 90% of fighter engine production.

GE and Rolls Royce have both developed excellent records of quality and performance in military aviation. Yet, if they are not allowed to compete for future F-35 engine contracts, the GE and Rolls Royce market shares will diminish and their current expertise in fighter engine development will disappear. We often look at military programs strictly in terms of the dollars and cents expended each year. But we cannot forget that over the last several decades, billions of dollars have gone to GE and Rolls Royce for research and development. Cancelling this program and cutting these companies out of future fighter engine production would be like throwing away these taxpayer dollars. Simply put, we would lose that expertise and may not get it back without billions in additional investment.

It is true that small savings would be seen if we cancel the F136 today. But the American taxpayers have already invested over \$3 billion in this program—over 75% of what is needed for the engine to enter full competitive production. With just a small investment, we can bring competition to this \$100 billion engine program. According to historical analyses conducted by GAO, the completion spurred by this relatively small investment could save up to 20% over the next few decades. These savings are especially likely given the fixed price contract offered to the DOD by GE and Rolls Royce—we will not see price increases but we will likely see decreases because of competition.

I understand that many of my colleagues were elected to Congress last year on the promise to cut spending. But we all need to remember that our debt problems will not be short lived. It has taken decades to build this debt and it may take many more years to eliminate it. We clearly need to do everything possible NOW to address our debt. But we cannot overlook billions in savings just to achieve small, symbolic cuts today. Killing the alternate engine, eliminating thousands of jobs, adding to the unemployment rolls and foregoing significant future savings just does not make sense to the American taxpayers.

The alternate engine for the F-35 is not only critical for jobs and economic development in my district but also for the strength of our defense industrial base and the reduction of our national debt. So whether or not this program directly impacts your districts, I hope that you will all keep in mind the long-term impact as you begin consideration of the next defense authorization act.

Thank you Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of this important program.