



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

MAY 01 2014

The Honorable Vicky Hartzler
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hartzler:

Thank you for your February 6, 2014, letter to the President regarding the proposed A-10 fleet divestiture. As you correctly note, the current fiscal environment has forced the Department of Defense to make difficult choices across a range of mission areas to ensure it can continue to meet all requirements of the defense strategy.

The 2015 President's Budget proposal does include divestiture of the A-10 fleet over the next five years. That divestiture in no way represents a lessening of the Air Force's firm commitment to its role as the primary force provider for close air support (CAS). It is important to note that seven other Air Force aircraft types are capable of performing this critical mission and have provided exemplary CAS for combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, since 2006, over 80 percent of CAS sorties have been flown by aircraft other than the A-10. These assets are capable of replacing the A-10 in the CAS mission in both current and future scenarios. Additionally, the A-10 is optimized to conduct operations against fielded enemy forces and cannot conduct other missions critical to the success of the joint force such as air superiority, suppression of enemy air defenses, and homeland defense. Since current fiscal constraints require us to shrink our force, the Air Force must retain more flexible multi-role aircraft capable of conducting a wider variety of missions in order to meet the Defense Strategic Guidance. Extensive classified analysis has shown that gradually retiring the A-10 in order to preserve funding for investments in the remaining fourth and fifth generation aircraft fleets result in the lowest overall risk in future operational environments.

Using a transparent Total Force approach, the Air Force sought to leverage Air National Guard and Reserve Forces by re-missioning units with similar airframes whenever possible. For example, all Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve A-10 squadrons are programmed to receive replacement flying missions, with four of the six squadrons receiving F-16s or F-15Es. This will help ensure we retain the CAS expertise of these exceptional Airmen and protect our Armed Forces in close combat.

We understand your concern over the A-10 divestiture and would be happy to have our experts meet with you and your staff to explain the importance of this proposal for the Air Force's ability to field a capable force for decades to come. Thank you for your continued support of the Department of Defense and for your service to our Nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine H. Fox", is written over a white background.

Christine H. Fox
Acting