THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

JUL 13 2009

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6050

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Senators Levin and McCain:

We are writing to express our strong objection to the provisions in the Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act allocating $1.75 billion for seven additional F-22s. I believe it is critically important to complete the F-22 buy at 187 – the program of record since 2005, plus four additional aircraft.

There is no doubt that the F-22 is an important capability for our Nation's defense. To meet future scenarios, however, the Department of Defense has determined that 187 aircraft are sufficient, especially considering the future roles of Unmanned Aerial Systems and the significant number of 5th generation stealth F-35s coming on-line in our combat air portfolio.

It is important to note that the F-35 is a half generation newer aircraft than the F-22, and more capable in a number of areas such as electronic warfare and combating enemy air defenses. To sustain U.S. overall air dominance, the Department's plan is to buy roughly 500 F-35s over the next five years and more than 2,400 over the life of the program.

Furthermore, under this plan, the U.S. by 2020 is projected to have some 2,500 manned fighter aircraft. Almost 1,100 of them will be 5th generation F-35s and F-22s. China, by contrast, is expected to have only slightly more than half as many manned fighter aircraft by 2020, none of them 5th generation.

The F-22 program proposed in the President's budget reflects the judgment of two different Presidents, two different Secretaries of Defense, three chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the current secretary and chief of staff of the Air

Force. If the Air Force is forced to buy additional F-22s beyond what has been requested, it will come at the expense of other Air Force and Department of Defense priorities – and require deferring capabilities in areas we believe are much more critical for our Nation's defense.

For all these reasons, we strongly believe that the time has come to close the F-22 production line. If the Congress sends legislation to the President that requires the acquisition of additional F-22 aircraft beyond Fiscal Year 2009, the Secretary of Defense will strongly recommend he veto it.

Sincerely,

Chairman, Joint Chiefs Staff

Secretary of Defense