

Statement of the Honorable Donald Norcross
Co-Chairman, Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces
“F-35 Program Update: Sustainment, Production, and Affordability Challenges”
November 13, 2019

- I want to thank my good friends from California, Colorado, and Missouri for agreeing to this important joint hearing with the Members of the Readiness and Tactical Air & Land Forces subcommittees.
- I too welcome and thank our distinguished panels of witnesses for taking the time to come before us to discuss this vital program.
- To meet our constitutional oversight responsibilities, we must hear from the Department’s program leaders; as well as those independent agencies that help us with evaluating program progress or shortfalls. We should also take this opportunity to get onto the record the testimony of the two prime contractors responsible for the production and sustainment of this critical capability for the warfighter that the American taxpayer is funding.
- I agree with everything already said here and note that the F-35 program is trying to recover from the risky acquisition decisions made by past program leaders; previous decisions that resulted in unforeseen increases in funding for development and

production to address the failed assumptions made for the high concurrency designed into this program.

- That bill, for past “acceptable” concurrency risk, is now due and has resulted in significant fiscal challenges facing us today.
- Block “3 F” configured aircraft being delivered today are only somewhat combat mission capable. There are still material deficiencies that negatively impact the low-observability characteristics of this aircraft —and that only a 5th Generation aircraft provides.
- And yet, while the System Development and Design phase of the program has officially ended, we now embark on the next upgrade known as Block 4 which is estimated to cost an additional \$20 billion in development and retrofit costs both for today’s fielded aircraft and future production aircraft to achieve full combat capability.
- Today, we want to understand:
 - What fixes are you making to the struggling Autonomic Logistics Information System, or “ALICE,”;
 - Where are we in finding and qualifying alternate sources of supply resulting from Turkey’s suspension from the program;
 - What is the strategy and execution plan to establish greater capacity, effectiveness, and insight with the prime

contractor's deficiencies with supply chain and parts management currently plaguing the efficiency of the production line and sustaining fielded aircraft?

- Finally, we'd like to learn what the Department is doing to establish common cost categories and metrics for evaluating the true ownership cost of aircraft, whether defined in terms of cost-per-flight hour or cost-per-tail-per year.
 - I believe it is imperative for leaders to establish Department-wide policy and guidance so that we're comparing costs with apples-to-apples input between and among legacy and future generation aircraft.
- The Tactical Air and Land Forces subcommittee has and will continue to support the program, but we don't have unlimited resources which seem continually needed to achieve the elusive term associated with this program, "affordability."
- With that, I again look forward to this hearing and yield back to my fellow Chairman.