

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 26, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge you to retain adequate funding for the Next Generation Bomber in the Fiscal Year 2010 defense budget. A recent media report suggests that termination of the Next Generation Bomber is being proposed by your administration as the Pentagon finalizes its FY2010 budget request. We believe termination of the Next Generation Bomber would do tremendous damage to our nation's future ability to project power abroad, and runs counter to what senior defense officials in your Administration have stated about the need for a Next Generation Bomber.

As you know, the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review directed the Air Force to "develop a new land-based, penetrating long range strike capability to be fielded by 2018." The need for this new long range strike capability is urgent because, while our current wars are being fought in undefended airspace, the conflicts of the near-term future will likely feature heavily defended airspace, due in large part to the proliferation of relatively inexpensive, but extremely sophisticated and deadly air defense systems. As General Michael Maples, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, noted during a March 10, 2009 Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on worldwide threats, "Russia, quite frankly, is the developer of most of those [advanced air defense] systems and is exporting those systems both to China and to other countries in the world."

Nearly half of our bomber inventory pre-dates the Cuban Missile Crisis. The B-52 is a robust aircraft, but it is no longer survivable in defended airspace. While the B-1 can be upgraded, it still lacks the vital stealth technology that affords a greater level of protection in defended airspace. With only sixteen combat ready B-2 bombers currently available with vital stealth technology to hold targets deep in heavily defended airspace at risk, a decision to terminate the Next Generation Bomber would severely diminish our ability to project power on a global scale in the future. Should you decide to terminate this important program, the consequences to our national security would be grave.

Aside from our view about the urgent need for development of the Next Generation Bomber, senior officials you have selected to lead the Department of Defense have stated the need for a Next Generation Bomber. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates discussed the need for a new bomber as recently as January of this year, in an article for *Foreign Affairs* entitled "A Balanced Strategy," writing that the United States' ability to strike from over the horizon will be at a premium in future conflicts and "will require shifts from short-range to longer-range systems, such as the next-generation bomber." Michele Flournoy, Under Secretary of Defense

for Policy, stated at her nomination hearing on January 15, 2009 that "I think the need for long-range precision strikes that can penetrate the most sophisticated enemy air defenses is absolutely critical."

With an aging bomber fleet that is highly vulnerable to inexpensive yet sophisticated air defense systems rapidly being acquired by potential adversaries of the United States, continued development of the Next Generation Bomber is vital to our nation's future security. As senior defense officials within your Administration have stated, the need for a Next Generation Bomber is absolutely critical. Therefore, we respectfully urge you to continue development of the Next Generation Bomber.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
United States Senator



TIM JOHNSON
United States Senator



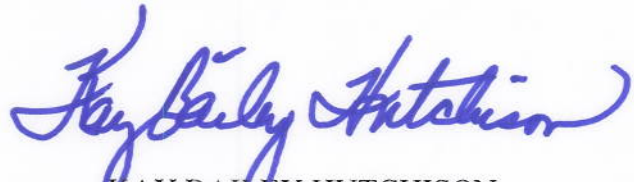
DAVID VITTER
United States Senator



MARY LANDRIEU
United States Senator



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator



KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON
United States Senator

cc: Honorable Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Honorable Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense
Honorable Michele Flournoy, Under Secretary of Defense, Policy