

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 8, 2017

The Honorable James N. Mattis  
Secretary of Defense  
1100 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Mattis,

We are writing to you because we were recently informed that the Air Force wishes to explore alternative intelligence and surveillance platforms instead of continued pursuit of the recapitalization of the E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) fleet. JSTARS is truly a joint platform, and we are tremendously concerned about the possibility of any capability gap. We hope that any decision regarding the future of JSTARS is made with consideration for the needs of the Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve components across the services, as well as combatant commander requirements.

As you know, JSTARS provides unparalleled Battlefield Management, Command and Control, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. The Ground Moving Target Indicator (GMTI) capability of JSTARS has proven itself indispensable in Operation Inherent Resolve, the counter-drug mission in the Western Hemisphere, and in Africa searching for terrorist groups. Additionally, the rise in threats from near-peer adversaries only increases the already high demand for JSTARS capabilities. Combatant Commanders have made clear in congressional testimony and in private meetings with us their urgent requirement for the capability provided by JSTARS, including the desire for considerably more coverage than the current legacy fleet is able to provide.

While the rationale for this decision has not yet been made known to us, cancelling or delaying would be ill-advised and directly impact our combatant commanders who employ this asset in theater. There is no alternative for JSTARS and indicators of its retirement are unacceptable. Without this capability, we greatly diminish our nation's airpower and reduce our combat strength.

We were also informed that a new analysis of alternatives will soon be underway for replacing the JSTARS recapitalization program. We are alarmed by this announcement, as the Department of Defense has already conducted analysis of alternatives prior to initiating the recapitalization process. As you may know, in recent history there have been no less than five studies to look at alternatives. All have resulted in the same answer: the JSTARS recapitalization program that is currently underway. The lengthy recapitalization process for JSTARS has already increased the possibility of a capabilities gap that may expose warfighters to more risk. Another analysis of alternatives would surely lead to an even greater capabilities gap that would be devastating to our troops on the ground and our nation's ability to meet operational requirements.


Additionally, abruptly changing course on the JSTARS recapitalization is a tremendous waste of taxpayer dollars. The planned E-10 platform to replace the current JSTARS was halted in Fiscal Year (FY) 2008, leading to the waste of nearly \$2 billion. Over \$265 million has already been spent on the current JSTARS recapitalization. Further changes only serve to be a gross abuse of taxpayer funds.

Congress has consistently urged the Air Force to not only support, but to accelerate the recapitalization of the JSTARS fleet to meet these demands, most recently in the FY 2017 Omnibus Appropriations Act. This intent was reiterated in the House and Senate Armed Services Committee markup of the FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act.

Your leadership is required to meet the expectations Congress has clearly communicated about moving the JSTARS Recapitalization program forward as rapidly as possible. You can depend on our support for your efforts, but the direction the Air Force appears to be moving is simply wrong—more delay is not an option.


We look forward to a response to our concerns as soon as possible, as well as an update on the way ahead for the JSTARS Recapitalization program.

Sincerely,




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Johnny Isakson  
United States Senator



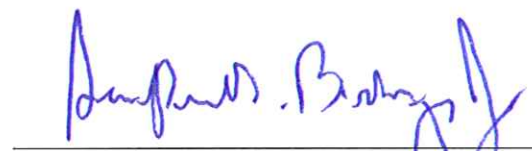
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David A. Perdue  
United States Senator



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Austin Scott  
U.S. House of Representatives



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Sanford Bishop  
U.S. House of Representatives



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Tom Graves  
U.S. House of Representatives