



**SUBCOMMITTEE ON AIRLAND
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

To Receive an Update On
the F-35 Aircraft Program
Tuesday, June 23, 2026
Washington, D.C.

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1 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE F-35 AIRCRAFT PROGRAM

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U.S. Senate

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Subcommittee on Airland

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Committee on Armed Services

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Washington, D.C.

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10 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 4:17 p.m., in
11 Room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Kevin
12 Cramer, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

13 Committee Members Present: Senators Cramer
14 [presiding], Moody, and Kelly.

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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. KEVIN CRAMER, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM NORTH DAKOTA

3 Senator Cramer: Good afternoon, everyone, and thank
4 you, General Masiello, for being here, and being our only
5 star witness today. And thank you to my colleagues for
6 their attention to this very important discussion on the F-
7 35 program, which, as we all know, is a cornerstone of
8 American air power, and one of the most consequential
9 defense programs of our generation. And it's all about
10 generations these days, although I've noticed that
11 generations are -- the timeline of a generation is much
12 shorter than it used to be.

13 The F-35 is a strategic asset that strengthens
14 deterrence, enhances interoperability, and reinforces the
15 alliances and partnerships that underpin global security.
16 Its success among our allies and partners is a testament to
17 both its unmatched capabilities, and its ability to enable
18 seamless operations alongside United States forces. Nations
19 around the world continue to choose the F-35 because it
20 strengthens collective defense and regional stability. That
21 growing demand reflects confidence in American technology,
22 industry, and leadership, while also delivering real
23 benefits to the United States through improved coalition
24 readiness, greater burden sharing, and a stronger industrial
25 base that supports American workers and warfighters.

1 At the same time, we all recognize that success cannot
2 be measured solely by sales or participation. The program
3 must continue delivering the advanced capabilities our
4 service members need on schedule and at a reasonable cost.
5 That brings us to one of the most important topics before us
6 today: making sure the Block 4 modernization effort gets and
7 stays on track.

8 Block 4 is essential to preserving the f-35's
9 operational advantage in an increasingly contested
10 environment. Our adversaries are investing heavily in
11 advanced air defenses, electronic warfare capabilities, and
12 next-generation aircraft. To maintain the F-35s edge. We
13 must deliver the upgrades that improve lethality,
14 survivability, sensor integration, range, and mission
15 effectiveness.

16 Finally, I'd also like an update on the Joint Program
17 Office's plans to transition toward more service to specific
18 program management responsibilities, as required by the
19 Fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, which
20 directed the Department to establish a separate program
21 office for each military service by 2027. I am interested
22 in whether the Department remains on track to meet the
23 statutory deadline, and how it plans to execute this
24 transition, while preserving the efficiencies of a joint
25 program and avoiding disruptions to production readiness and

1 modernization efforts.

2 With that, I thank you for joining us today, and I look
3 forward to your testimony, General. Senator Kelly.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. MARK KELLY, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 ARIZONA

3 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General,
4 thank you for being here today. The F-35 remains a
5 cornerstone of American air power and a critical capability
6 for the Air Force, the Navy, and the Marine Corps. I've
7 seen this firsthand. I had the opportunity a couple of
8 years ago to fly an F-16 against an F-35, and it was
9 informative, to say the least. Could not see it on radar,
10 even when I'm looking right at it, which was impressive.
11 Had a crappy first turn so I was able to gun them up after a
12 9G turn in an F-16. And then I've also had the opportunity
13 to fly the simulator down in Pax River against J-20s and the
14 F-35. Impressive capability. Nothing like when I was
15 flying in the Navy. This airplane is going to, you know,
16 have a major role in any future conflict and especially in
17 like a contested environment.

18 Today's hearing though, is about, you know, how do we
19 field the F-35, and get the airplanes out into the fleet and
20 get them fully mission capable with the challenges that
21 remain, and I think it's fair to say that some of these
22 challenges are significant. We've got new capabilities
23 with, Block 4 tech refresh that are slow to be deployed
24 despite that this is a multi-billion-dollar effort.

25 So, we all understand there's challenges with new

1 technology. I think it's fair to say that we've made some
2 mistakes along the way. But those mistakes shouldn't be the
3 same ones that we made before. I'm also concerned about the
4 long-term sustainment costs of the airplane for the entire
5 fleet. This has a big impact on the Department's budget and
6 also then impacts the cost of acquiring airplanes.

7 At one point, the estimate was as large as over \$1
8 trillion for the for the program. So, we need to understand
9 what the Department is doing to reduce these future
10 potential costs. And if those costs continue to rise,
11 they're going to increase pressure on readiness and on other
12 modernization priorities across the entire Department. So,
13 this could mean less money to invest in the force structure
14 that we need for our national security.

15 But I think it is also fair to say that this committee
16 has been a strong supporter of the F-35, and I am a strong
17 supporter of it. I think its capability is not like
18 anything we've really had before, but that also means if
19 we're going to continue to support it, we need
20 accountability, and we need to have a clear understanding of
21 how the Department is improving readiness, controlling
22 costs, and ensuring that the program delivers on the
23 promises. We must ensure that we do not sacrifice other
24 important acquisition programs in the DOD portfolio. So, I
25 look forward to hearing from you, General, and discussing a

1 path forward for the F-35. Thank you.

2 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Senator Kelly. So,
3 Lieutenant General Gregory Masiello is the program executive
4 officer, F-35 Lightning II Joint Program Office. Hard to
5 imagine, a more significant position right now with what
6 we're dealing with.

7 One of the things, General, before you make your
8 opening statement and we start the discussion is I'm going
9 to be wanting some sort of an update as well on the multi-
10 year procurement process, how you see that playing out. You
11 know, we recognized that as a committee, we just want to --
12 would love to get an assessment, your assessment of all of
13 that. And with that, General, thank you for being here and
14 I'll open it for your opening statement.

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1 LIEUTENANT GENERAL GREGORY L. MASIELLO, USMC, PROGRAM
2 EXECUTIVE OFFICER, F-35 LIGHTNING II JOINT PROGRAM OFFICE

3 General Masiello: First of all, thank you, Chairman
4 Cramer, and Ranking Member Kelly, members of the
5 subcommittee. I truly enjoy the opportunity to be here
6 today, of course, we just started. But the last time
7 somebody in my position was in front of anyone from the SASC
8 was in 2016, so a lot has changed in the program since then.
9 I have only been in this role since last July, but a
10 considerable amount has changed. So, I'll run through an
11 opening statement, and look forward to the discussion. I
12 appreciate the fact that you both talked about the F-35 as
13 the cornerstone. This is for the U.S. and for many of our
14 allies and partners. This is the capacity fighter at scale,
15 multi-role. There isn't anything else like it and what it
16 does.

17 What I feel in my job and the job of our joint program
18 office is to ensure that our globally deployed or deployable
19 fleet for the U.S. and our allies and partners is ready.
20 It's affordable, it's lethally effective, and survivable.
21 Now, I realize that it's not my job to judge affordability.
22 It's the people that have and pay the money. So, we do talk
23 about cost control, and I'm happy to talk about that in the
24 program, and I will highlight things like we measure and
25 cost per tail per year. And if you look at where we are

1 across all of our variants in the U.S. inventory, we are
2 better than the targets that we have been given. So, that's
3 not good enough. And we will talk about our global
4 sustainment system reset, and the areas that we're going
5 after and not just capacity.

6 First, I will say currently there are over 1,300
7 operational F-35s out there, 832 of which are inside the
8 U.S. inventory, and the other ones are with our partner
9 nations. If you look in numbers of bases, there are
10 currently 42 different sites. I happen to have gone to
11 Poland just a week before last for the -- that new base
12 stand up and for their first aircraft arrival. And in
13 addition to that, there are 13 ships, 3 of which are
14 international or in other nations. The rest are ours.

15 But if I look back in perspective, when somebody sat
16 here, it would have been General Bogdan in 2016, we had 12
17 global participants in the program. Today, we have 20. We
18 had flight hours then at about 60,000, now we're over 1.2
19 million. We have learned a lot across this time frame.
20 There were a lot of aircraft. Then there were 170. And I
21 already pointed out we've delivered and have out there
22 flying and operating over 1,300.

23 We had hundreds of pilots, 300 then, we have over
24 3,000, almost 3,500 pilots trained, and almost 21,000
25 maintainers trained as opposed to the 2,700 we had then.

1 One service happened to have been the Marine Corps had
2 achieved IOC in, 2016, we're up to 14 different services.
3 So, well beyond our 3 in our country, and several of those
4 countries have received their entire program of record and 2
5 of which have declared FOC, the Netherlands and Australia.

6 I mentioned the site activations. There were nine were
7 now out there across the globe. That's a significant
8 footprint. So, why do I talk about it that way? This
9 program is truly joint, not just across the Departments of
10 Air Force and the Navy, and our three U.S. services in
11 development, and sustainment, and production, and
12 operationally in development. We had our partner nations
13 early on contributing that way.

14 In training today, just last week, we had an
15 international force in the High North training in Norway,
16 landing their jets on the highways in Finland, U.S. jets, as
17 well as Italian and other nations preparing as a joint
18 force. That is not something I'm sure we envisioned in
19 2016. We have the same in the Pacific, and we share a
20 global spares pool that I'm sure we will talk about. It has
21 its advantages, which we will talk about.

22 In some cases, I'd like to talk about some specifics in
23 that in our closed session. In this session, I think I can
24 say one of our challenges, and you talked about it, is if I
25 have over 1,300 operational aircraft out there. I believe

1 we have set and enabled a sustainment system for about 700
2 to 800. So, there is our challenge in readiness. We have a
3 North Star for 80 percent MC across the entirety of the
4 fleet, and we need to figure out how to do that.

5 That leads me to the generational investment in the
6 President's Budget 2027. I see I'm almost out of time, but
7 I will close the opening statement with operationally
8 significant for those that have been briefed and understand
9 what the aircraft can do, and you both certainly have. But
10 the operations in Rough Rider, Absolute Resolve, Midnight
11 Hammer and Epic Fury demonstrate the unique capabilities,
12 and I have been told by many operators this is the only
13 aircraft that can hit some of the targets that it was able
14 to hit and see everything that it could be to actually act
15 as a quarterback of that Joint Force.

16 It's not just us. I know other nations that I
17 mentioned. I know of a Norwegian pilot falling in on a
18 Dutch aircraft and flying combat air patrol over Poland.
19 That is not something we envisioned before, but it should
20 show the inextricable link of this global nature of the
21 program, and the challenges, and the benefits that that
22 brings for us.

23 So, with that, I will finish my closing statement. And
24 so, I don't forget here, I'll close that statement with a
25 happy birthday to Creighton Green sitting behind you. I

1 appreciate his support as well, and how pleased he is that I
2 mentioned that.

3 [The prepared statement of General Masiello follows:]
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1 Senator Cramer: Well, thanks for that. And as long as
2 you brought it up, let's just get right into the pain for it
3 piece of it. Because, you know, we're in this moment now
4 where your Fiscal Year 2027 budget included considerable
5 amount of money and mandatory spending for the for the F-35,
6 in fact, over \$13 billion. Some of it some of this is
7 additional aircraft and associated initial spares, but a lot
8 of it is fully funding and accelerating existing mission
9 critical programs, to include \$1.3 billion for the Block 4
10 engine and power thermal management upgrade. Can you give
11 us a sense of how you break that out between the -- you
12 know, the requested budget, and appropriations, and possible
13 reconciliation 3.0., and if there's a contingency plan if
14 one or the other doesn't work out, because, as you know,
15 we're rather famous for not funding things on time.

16 General Masiello: Yes, sir, I appreciate that. First,
17 I will start for -- I appreciate the reconciliation last
18 year, \$1 billion was allocated towards the F-35 program.
19 That's going under contract. That will enable us to help
20 stabilize some of the support that we mentioned in spare
21 parts. For the 2027 budget, I'll be clear, that we
22 submitted our budget for the F-35 program in its entirety.
23 And so, what is in the base budget as well as, you know,
24 whether you call it discretionary or mandatory, the totality
25 is what we believe is required. It gets after -- it does

1 have an increase in aircraft. It's a buy of 85 aircraft for
2 the U.S., and that combines with the international partners
3 and friends out there as well.

4 So, if we did not get the totality of the budget or
5 only got one portion of it, there's a significant impact for
6 the production line and the number of aircraft, as well as
7 in the details of how that budget was split. So, I
8 understand, I am obviously supportive of the budget in its
9 entirety. It will fund the Block 4. It will fund the
10 engine core upgrade, as well as the PTMU upgrade, the EPM in
11 its entirety, and both of those are essential for the engine
12 to enable even the full capabilities of the Block 4 as we do
13 it.

14 And I will tell you, it's not my first lap in the F-35
15 program, a decade ago, I started in here with the beginning
16 of what was Block 4. So, I'm both happy to be back and a
17 little, you know, surprised that we haven't fielded as much
18 as we had planned, so I understand the importance of it. I
19 do recognize that we have of the original requirements. We
20 have fielded 22 of them, and we continue in the incremental
21 software upgrades. We delivered seven of the Block 4
22 capabilities in last year's upgrade. There's another six
23 planned for this summer in the software upgrade. But to
24 fully do the development work, we do need that budget.

25 Senator Cramer: Okay. So, thanks for that. And it

1 gets a little bit into maybe what I wanted to bring up next.
2 And that is what problems do you see in the deployment
3 pipeline there most readily fixable to achieve, you know, to
4 achieve the goal to get up to speed as you describe it?

5 General Masiello: Yes, sir. Well, I will tell you --
6 I'll talk about sustainment first. I think in my job, I
7 think I work for the aviation maintainers, and I think if I
8 look at it, our job is to deliver combat readiness. It is
9 sustainment first of our existing fleet and the ability to
10 maintain the fleet that we get. So, we looked and did a
11 very detailed analysis across our whole sustainment system,
12 came across five areas that we now call in our global GSS
13 reset and sustainment system, and we're going to go through
14 and start executing that.

15 That is not just solely about buying spare parts, it is
16 inclusive of that, making a catch up on the investment that
17 we have failed to make in the past, and then a keep up in
18 that. But it is also relooking at our entire maintenance
19 plan all the way through from the very low level, all the
20 way to the depot level with a million plus flight hours. We
21 have learned on the aircraft; we can make some adjustments.

22 With over 13 countries operating the aircraft, we have
23 lessons learned from people that are from different
24 countries and why they have time on wing and some components
25 that we don't have, and we can apply that. So, we will go

1 through and do that and the optimization of the entirety of
2 our maintenance system.

3 Senator Cramer: So, one of the things you talked about
4 in your opening statement, I think you highlighted that the
5 sort of the global nature of this airplane, and the
6 opportunities that presents for the industrial base and for
7 alliances. Maybe give us a sense of how are our allies, you
8 know, other potential customers viewing what we're going
9 through right now in terms of whether it's wariness about
10 the on-time procurement, or lessons, these lessons learned
11 that, you know, that you're learning. How are they feeling
12 about it? How is that? How do you handle all of that?

13 General Masiello: Well, sir, it's quite a large
14 program, as you talk about. I'll tell you, they do pay
15 attention to the U.S. budget and the support that we get and
16 are looking forward to the approval of the President's
17 Budget 2027, because it puts in place stability across our
18 industrial base. And that is international. It certainly
19 is across 49 States in our country and Puerto Rico, and it's
20 thousands of suppliers across Lockheed Martin, as well as
21 Pratt & Whitney, and others. But it's also international.

22 So, they are certainly watching that. The aircraft is
23 assembled in Texas, in Japan, or in Italy. They are looking
24 at those impacts and the flow of all those parts and pieces.
25 They certainly need to know that we are fully in and

1 supportive as well as the development.

2 Senator Cramer: Great. All right. Thank you.

3 General Masiello: If I could, you asked me about
4 multi-year.

5 Senator Cramer: Yeah, yeah, I did earlier. If you
6 want to answer, that's fine. It looks like we're going to
7 have plenty of time. So, Senator Kelly, I'll give him one
8 more minute than you take from me. Go ahead.

9 General Masiello: Okay. I was just going to say on
10 the multiyear procurement, the most important thing for me,
11 and that is we do have a stable aircraft. We have stable
12 design. We are mature. We're now looking at our lot 20
13 aircraft. It doesn't mean that there isn't change, and it
14 doesn't mean that there aren't challenges. But we now know
15 what they are and we have the ability in a long-term
16 contract.

17 So, I'm very appreciative of the committee's support
18 for the multi-year. And I know that our ledge prop has made
19 it over that asks up to a 10-year time frame with
20 procurement that is not just of the production line
21 aircraft, but also the initial spares also of the mod kits.
22 All the hardware that we would buy would aggregate that
23 demand across the entirety of the program. We have not done
24 that before. I think, Senator, that gets after some of the
25 cost objectives because you have aggregated demand, which is

1 really good. It's also the stability that industrial base
2 that you just talked about. There is a companion to that in
3 sustainment that we need to make sure we have, and that will
4 also feed into how we transition, which is another question
5 you had into the services as that continues to mature.

6 Senator Cramer: Excellent. All right. Ranking member
7 Kelly, you're recognized for at least 7.5 minutes.

8 Senator Kelly: Thank you. So, the GAO FMC rate is
9 they said 25 percent. Your office claims it's 56 percent.
10 So, let's say it's somewhere between -- or maybe I'll we'll
11 go with your number 50 percent. So, half of the airplanes
12 are not fully mission capable, and I think it's the Marine
13 Corps that has been accepting airplanes with no radar in it.
14 Is that correct?

15 General Masiello: We have accepted six aircraft for
16 the Marine Corps that do not have a radar installed. That
17 is correct.

18 Senator Kelly: And because they want to wait for the
19 APG-85, is my assumption?

20 General Masiello: They do.

21 Senator Kelly: Yeah. So -- and I get it, and we could
22 talk downstairs some more about the capability of the radar
23 and what the challenges are going forward. So, I assume
24 that those airplanes can't count as fully mission capable
25 with no radar?

1 General Masiello: I don't think I would count them as
2 fully mission capable. But in your early statement on the
3 numbers, 2556 is what we say for the mission capability as
4 opposed to FMC, full mission capability. And I know you
5 understand the differences.

6 Senator Kelly: But you say you don't think. I can't
7 imagine a scenario where an F-35 with no radar could be an
8 FMC airplane.

9 General Masiello: I understand, sir.

10 Senator Kelly: Okay. So, part of it is that what is
11 the other issues? I remember early on you were having
12 turbine blade cracks from FOD. Is that one of the other
13 bigger problems?

14 General Masiello: That is not one of the bigger
15 problems in production, the IBR, the integrally, it's the
16 blade inside of the engine that you're talking about had
17 some production challenges. They've now triple sourced the
18 production to help on that, and we have improvement across
19 the engine production as well as the reliability.

20 Senator Kelly: So, what's the top three things that
21 takes an airplane out of being fully mission capable?

22 General Masiello: I would say the top three are the
23 software capability enabled things. TR-3 that you mentioned
24 earlier is not a degrader, that is mission capable in there,
25 but that is the backbone that we plug in all of the other

1 bits and pieces. So, the radar, as you pointed for a
2 subset, the 81 radar that is in the preponderance of the
3 fleet is up and operating fine. So, that's not the major
4 driver. We do have some challenges with the time on wing
5 for our canopies. That is a major degrader that some will
6 rate or it's a low observable aircraft, and therefore, that
7 piece is integral part of it.

8 Senator Kelly: Is there would just skin issues like
9 low observable repairs that need to be done? Does that tend
10 to take airplanes out of --

11 General Masiello: Yes, sir.

12 Senator Kelly: -- flying condition?

13 General Masiello: Yes, sir. But that is also one
14 where I say there's an opportunity. Some of our different
15 countries or different squadrons have better time on wing,
16 and we go and we look at that. We've done that. It's
17 maintenance. It is taking care of the issue when it arises,
18 as opposed to noting it, flying the aircraft, coming back,
19 and having a larger issue, if that makes sense.

20 Senator Kelly: So, if the sustainment system out there
21 is sized, I think you said for 700 to 800 aircraft, that
22 means the parts and other depot level maintenance and other
23 things, but there's 1,300 operational airplanes, how do you
24 get to a sustainment system that is for 1,300, and how long
25 will that take?

1 General Masiello: Yes, sir. So, that is part of our
2 GSS reset. And I will tell you what we have done about
3 that. We went back and looked at the modeling that we had
4 for the spares that we were asking folks to buy, and we have
5 remodeled and baselined. We have made sure -- you mentioned
6 both of the other services as far as the Air Force and the
7 Navy, and gone through to make sure it's the same thing.
8 And that is now what we're putting forth is the requirement,
9 which is the reason why, in this generational investment of
10 the 2027 budget will help us. So, we will fill up the
11 available parts.

12 I think that is the main driver. It's not a systemic
13 issue with the system having the ability. It's the fact
14 that we didn't put enough parts and pieces on the shelf.
15 And we've increased the demand exponentially with the number
16 of aircraft fielded, and we didn't do the same thing with
17 the spare parts and the system.

18 Senator Kelly: And then earlier, you said there were
19 five areas in sustainment that you needed to focus on. You
20 said one, it wasn't just not buying enough spares, as you
21 mentioned. So, that has to be one.

22 General Masiello: That is one.

23 Senator Kelly: Depot level maintenance was two. What
24 were the other three?

25 General Masiello: The other three, I have that. By

1 the way, when we talk about the depot level maintenance, I
2 would say one of the things that's important you talked
3 about our organic capability. Over 56 percent of our depot
4 repair today is done in our U.S. services, the Navy and the
5 Air Force industrial base. So, we already have significant
6 participation. It is ramping up. That depot capability as
7 well as the optimization of the maintenance plans, those are
8 different, if you will.

9 Having said that, let me tell you about the Global
10 Spares Pool, optimized maintenance program, right sizing
11 that. It's expanding both the depot, the organic, as well
12 as our supplier capacity. Told you 56 percent is in
13 organic. The rest is in the industrial base that we need to
14 go back and maintain.

15 And I will highlight another point for us. It's
16 important for us to get our log IT, the logistics IT in
17 place so that what -- the way this program was formed
18 originally under TISPA, if you recall from that. We now are
19 going through and getting the access that will enable not
20 just our right to repair, but the actual insight into the
21 entire repair capacity. It will help us not just on the
22 audit, but it's fundamental in getting -- right-sizing that
23 industrial base.

24 Senator Kelly: And then, finally, does the Air Force
25 regret not buying the Navy version that carries more gas

1 because it has a bigger wing?

2 General Masiello: I probably would defer --

3 Senator Kelly: Loaded question.

4 General Masiello: -- to the Air Force on that, but I
5 don't find many people that are sad if they have more fuel
6 to fly in their aircraft.

7 Senator Kelly: Right. Thank you.

8 Senator Cramer: Thank you. I don't have a whole lot
9 more before we go into the closed session. But you speak so
10 articulately about -- again, back to my point about the
11 global nature of this airplane. And maybe if you would just
12 elaborate a little bit more first of on how that impacts.
13 Well, there's a lot of favorability for the United States,
14 but how it impacts the industrial base. And then sort of
15 the other part, if you will, the allied nature of being an
16 ally that shares the operation, if you will. Speak to that
17 from a human standpoint, as a warfighter standpoint, as much
18 as from the machinery itself?

19 General Masiello: Yes, sir. Well, I will tell you
20 that sitting on the flight line in Poland just a few weeks
21 ago and having their first with the Polish markings on the
22 aircraft arrive, the enthusiasm in their -- of being so
23 close to the United States as well as the global partners,
24 was evident, and their President and their defense minister
25 announced in their statements they're going to double their

1 program of record. It was 32, they're going to buy an
2 additional.

3 Now, I have not seen the money or the contract yet, but
4 that's significant, you know, context. If I look in a few
5 years, in Europe, as an example, we will have almost 800 F-
6 35s distributed across multiple nations. Less than 10
7 percent of that number will be U.S. aircraft. So, when we
8 talk about burden sharing, interoperability, you know, both
9 in cost and in the actual warfighting capability, that's
10 demonstrated to a different scale because of the number of
11 countries. We have that in the Pacific as well, whether
12 it's the Koreans, and the Japanese, Singapore, and
13 Australia, there will be hundreds of aircraft. And for the
14 U.S., depending on basing and deployment over there, we'll
15 have less than a quarter of those aircraft.

16 So, it is large in the program, but it's also shared in
17 the industrial base and the funds that go in there. We do
18 get parts and pieces from their industrial base that go into
19 the aircraft as well as ours that go throughout. I will
20 tell you, I would never have envisioned that we would have
21 had a British pilot flying Australian aircraft. Maybe you
22 would say that because they're English speaking, but we've
23 had that in deployments. We've had Marine aircraft deploy
24 on British ships going around the globe.

25 It is different. Our aircraft even -- we have language

1 barriers as humans. The aircraft do not have language
2 barriers when they talk to each other. The way they --
3 interoperability of the aircraft itself amongst its flight.
4 But it's really global. We will field starting next year a
5 beyond line of sight, receive capability across. And you
6 figure out of the network. We get that across the globe.

7 Senator Kelly: So, right now, you're cooling. You got
8 about 30kW. Block 4 requires 32, is what I have here. But
9 to get to the cooling needed to -- for the full capability
10 of the APG-85, needs to be somewhat higher, it seems like
11 62kW of cooling?

12 General Masiello: Yes, sir. The requirement that we
13 have for the program going forward is 62 to 80. We can talk
14 specifics about the radar downstairs that is incorporated
15 into the Block 4 requirements. The challenge I see is if
16 the totality of Block 4, when it's installed, and on the
17 aircraft, it takes the complete power available, which is
18 32. It's a cooling really is what we're looking at, the
19 ability, and there's no margin, which as you know, is not a
20 smart way to go. So, we have an incremental approach to
21 increase that. And we have an ongoing program to look at a
22 more systemic and affordable upgrade to the power thermal
23 management across the program.

24 Senator Kelly: So, when the APG-85 radars start to get
25 delivered, I imagine some airplanes are going to come with

1 them installed and others they'll go back to the depot, I
2 imagine, depot level maintenance to get the radar installed
3 in those six Marine Corps jets. Is the PTMS going to be
4 available at the same time to get full --

5 General Masiello: It will neither be required at the
6 same time nor be available. So, for the engine core upgrade
7 that we anticipate and have asked for additional funding on
8 that, we anticipate that being fielded in 2031, and it will
9 come with a marginal increase in the power thermal
10 management, but the actual system that's under review and
11 looking for the forward program will come a few years later
12 into the system, which is when we would have the additional
13 capabilities beyond Block 4, not yet to be determined that
14 will require that.

15 Senator Kelly: So, will you be able to talk downstairs
16 about what limited capability the APG-85 is going to have if
17 it doesn't have all the cooling?

18 General Masiello: We will be able to talk details
19 downstairs.

20 Senator Kelly: Thank you.

21 Senator Cramer: Senator Moody, welcome.

22 Senator Moody: Well, thank you and I get to sit
23 closest to you.

24 Senator Cramer: Thank you.

25 Senator Moody: Don't be intimidated because I'm

1 sitting so close. I am the newest member of this committee.
2 It is so nice to meet you. Thank you for your long service
3 to this country. Florida, which is my home State, is home
4 to the 125th Fighter Wing where we train the F-35 pilots.
5 And so, important to our State, and so many jobs, and so
6 many people that rely on the program. And one of the things
7 that my team and I have been discussing is I get to know
8 more about -- you know, we have numerous bases and numerous
9 combatant commands in Florida, and I'm learning more about
10 the programs that, rely a lot on our state and the military
11 service members that are in our State.

12 And this month, the Government Accountability Office
13 reported on persistent readiness and management problems in
14 the F-35 program, and because Florida is such a large part
15 of that program, I wanted to ask you a little bit about
16 that. Fleetwide, the mission capable rate fell from 67
17 percent to 44 percent since 2021, and the GAO found that the
18 Department couldn't fully account for its spare parts or
19 track the funds that it spends on them. And they
20 recommended that the Department build a system with quality
21 control safeguards to properly track those parts, costs, and
22 incentive payments.

23 And I just wanted to kind of hear from you. We were
24 talking about that, and we wanted to hear what was being
25 done to address that, and how those involved in the program

1 in Florida might be able to follow track and rely on what
2 you're being -- what's being done to address those concerns?

3 General Masiello: Yes, ma'am. Well, first, I will
4 say, as a legal resident of the State of Florida, although
5 have been living elsewhere for quite some time, I appreciate
6 your comments and the support --

7 Senator Moody: So, you are my constituent?

8 General Masiello: -- across the State -- it would be
9 apparently so.

10 Senator Moody: Yes.

11 General Masiello: Now, with respect to the GAO, I know
12 that those reports are controlled, unclassified data, but I
13 have spent time with the with the auditors, the
14 investigators for that, hours, sitting, through walking
15 through details. I understand how they came to their data.
16 I would tell you context matters, and I might have a -- I
17 don't dispute their numbers and how they do it as opposed to
18 how we might articulate it, if that's part of the
19 differences.

20 We are aligned that there are areas to change. I will
21 tell you, I am fully committed for audit, ability of F-35.
22 It's not just the way I dress. It's inherent in what we
23 should be doing being good stewards of not just our
24 taxpayers, but as we just discussed, global processes. I
25 believe we do have the ability. We have done a physical

1 inventory of all of those parts and pieces, so I'm quite
2 confident in our ability to track our gear today. Some of
3 their data is backwards-looking, and we have made some
4 changes. They have a series of recommendations which we
5 embrace, and are in action, and working on them now.

6 Senator Moody: In terms of the number of
7 recommendations or what would you say percentage-wise you've
8 accomplished or completed?

9 General Masiello: I would say they're probably all to
10 some degree in process, because even the one that we think
11 is closed out, that's over forwarded for review. Lots of
12 actions. And I previously discussed about our global
13 sustainment system reset that I think will address when I
14 talk to both of the auditors and getting after whether it's
15 the maintenance program, the spares, the processing through
16 there, the organic and the commercial depot repair, will
17 align greatly to resolve some of what they have identified.

18 Senator Moody: Thank you, sir.

19 Senator Cramer: Thank you. I think all of my
20 questions remaining will be better for the closed session.
21 Did you have any more either of you that you wanted to take
22 up any more? If not, then we'll close this portion of the
23 hearing, and we'll take it up and we'll say 10 to 15 minutes
24 downstairs.

25 [Whereupon, at 4:55 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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