



Senate Approves Amendment to Continue C-17 Production November 10, 2005

Washington, DC – The U.S. Senate today approved a bipartisan amendment which would maintain the production of the C-17 transport aircraft. The amendment, which was sponsored by Senators Jim Talent (R-Mo.) and Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and co-sponsored by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), was approved by a vote of 89-9.

“C-17s are a vital part of our nation’s strategic air lift and the efforts to modernize our force structure,” Senator Feinstein said. **“They’ve played a central role in missions in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world, and also in humanitarian missions along the gulf coast.”**

“This amendment would ensure the production of C-17s for many years to come. Not only will this mean that thousands of Californians will be able to keep their jobs on the production line in Long Beach, but it strengthens the mission at March Air Reserve Base and other bases like it. The fact that these planes will continue to be built helps ensure that this mission will stay at March in the future. My great thanks go to Senators Talent and Lieberman for their leadership in this effort.”

The Department of Defense recently briefed Congress on its draft plan to cease production of the C-17. The report has been criticized because it contradicts the long-standing position of the Air Force on the need for additional C-17s and fails to consider a number of key factors related to airlift needs. The amendment would authorize up to 42 new C-17s and create a new structure for the military to evaluate the need for additional airlift capacity.

The draft version of the Defense Department’s Mobility Capabilities Study, despite the clear need for additional airlift, recommends purchasing no C-17s beyond the 180 currently planned for.

The amendment would accomplish three objectives to protect the lift capability needed to deploy and sustain forces overseas:

- Authorize a multiyear contract for the purchase of up to 42 additional C-17 aircraft.
- Urges the Secretary of the Air Force to keep production lines open by sustaining at least a minimum production of C-17s until further assessment of airlift needs are completed.

- Require the Secretary of Defense to certify the need for additional C-17s through the Quadrennial Defense Review by assessing the additional inter-theater airlift requirements generated by 7 factors not fully considered in the flawed mobility study, including: the Army's shift to brigade combat teams, its goal of deploying a brigade anywhere in the world in 4 to 7 days and a division anywhere in the world in ten, our increased involvement in international humanitarian relief missions and the deployment back to the U.S. of forces as part of the Global Posture Review.

The C-17 is the primary inter-theater air transport used by the U.S. to deploy and sustain forces overseas. C-17s have recently been deployed in several key roles in the War on Terror, special operations missions and training, and humanitarian relief. The C-17 has delivered 70 percent of the cargo airlifted into Iraq.

The amendment was added to the Defense Authorization bill which the Senate is expected to approve later this week. The bill will then go to a Conference Committee with the House.

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