

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2016

The Honorable Deborah Lee James
Secretary
United States Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330

Dear Secretary James:

We write today to urge the Air Force to defer the retirement of the U-2 aircraft in order to prevent a possible gap in high altitude Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) collection beyond FY2019.

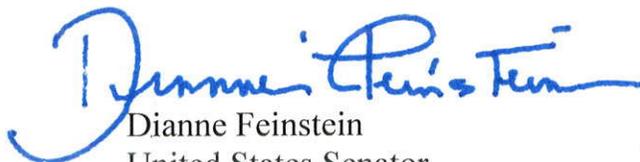
As you know, demand by Combatant Commanders for ISR is increasing. At the same time, current Defense Department plans call for the retirement of the U-2 in 2019 with no plan that we are aware of to replace lost ISR capacity.

We understand that the U-2 fleet has almost 80% of its airframe life remaining, making it sustainable well beyond FY2019. Retirement of the U-2 in the coming years is expected to result in a reduction in high altitude ISR capacity, including the loss of the U-2's unique intelligence gathering capabilities.

Rather than seeking to retire the U-2, we encourage the Air Force to consider continuing to fly a mixed fleet of both U-2 and Global Hawk aircraft to prevent a gap in both capability and capacity. While we appreciate your support for near-term capability upgrades to the U-2's radar and sensors, further investment in the aircraft is limited due to its retirement date. Deferring the retirement of the U-2 would also allow the Air Force time to plan for follow-on systems capable of meeting the full spectrum of high altitude ISR requirements well into the future.

In conclusion, we urge the Air Force to defer the retirement of the U-2 in order to ensure that our Combatant Commanders have the ISR they require.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Kevin McCarthy
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress



Devin Nunes
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Steve Knight
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress