

BOND: AIR FORCE HAS A LOT TO EXPLAIN

Senator Questions Waste of Taxpayer Funds, Award to European Company

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Kit Bond questioned the Air Force’s decision-making in awarding a \$40 billion contract to a government-subsidized European company at today’s Defense Appropriations Subcommittee hearing.

“The Air Force has a lot to explain – from the waste of taxpayer dollars on excessive base construction at Air Guard bases to accommodate the European model, to the lack of coordination with the Air National Guard during its consideration,” said Bond. “Flawed Air Force policy threatens to deny military air assets we badly need, is going to put the jobs of hard working American men and women at risk, and diminishes the long-term U.S. competitive capacity of U.S. military manufacturing.”

Today the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee – a committee on which Bond is a senior member -- held a much-needed hearing on the Air Force’s budget. Bond stressed that today’s hearing is a critical component of Congressional oversight and an opportunity to raise serious concerns with the Air Force’s management.

For St. Louis, Air Force’s mismanagement has serious consequences, emphasized Bond. The current Air Force strategy ignores the impact on the industrial base, particularly that of the tactical fighter industrial base in St. Louis, which produces F-15’s and F/A-18s and on the current path, will be out of the fighter production business in 2013.

Bond cited the sole sourcing of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, a bad decision Bond warned the Air Force against, that has diminished competition, resulted in significant delays and has resulted in tremendous cost growth. Bond pointed to the nonpartisan General Accounting Office (GAO) report released today indicating that F-35 costs are to hit \$1 trillion, and that the program has been dogged by delays, manufacturing inefficiencies and price increases. Unlike the Joint Strike Fighter boondoggle, the Boeing St. Louis industry team has consistently delivered to its Navy and Air Force customers platforms that pound for pound and dollar for dollar are the best in this fiscal environment and are the most effective at defeating the current threats, said Bond. He noted that Boeing’s C-17 and F/A-18 programs, which have been on time and under cost.

Bond raised concerns with the Air Force’s latest questionable decision, when two weeks ago the Air Force made the decision to award a large portion of a \$40 billion contract – the KC-X tanker -- to a government-subsidized, European company. Bond recently learned that the Air National Guard, which manages 41 percent of the air tanker assets at 20 facilities across the nation, was not consulted on the KC-X tanker solicitation. From the Air Guard, Bond learned there may be significant military construction costs associated with the winning European tanker. Since the Air Force failed to consult with the Air National Guard, the European tanker won’t fit in current Air Guard hangar facilities and is too heavy for current runways, forcing billions of additional dollars to be spent on new hangar facilities, support equipment, ramp and runway upgrades.

“While I am committed to ensuring our Air Force continues to maintain air dominance I am also committed to Boeing workers in St. Louis, who make the best military aircraft in the world,” said Bond.