



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

November 16, 2023

The Honorable Frank Kendall  
Secretary of the Air Force  
U.S. Department of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Kendall,

Earlier this year, Beijing sent more than 100 fighter jets and nine navy ships into the Taiwan Strait, “marking the largest single-day incursion in three years.”<sup>1</sup> Forty People’s Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft entered Taiwan’s air defense identification zone (ADIZ) during this exercise as a blatant example of China’s continued military harassment of Taiwan. This is not an aberration—the Chinese Communist Party is mounting an increasingly aggressive pressure campaign against the island that continues to intensify. The U.S. Department of Defense’s 2023 China Military Power Report noted that the PLA sent a total of 1,737 aircraft into Taiwan’s ADIZ in 2022, “a 79 percent increase from 972 incursions in 2021.”<sup>2</sup> As regional security concerns around the world expand, we urge you to focus on delivering the military aid that we have promised to Taiwan. To respond to China’s escalating air power demonstrations, we emphasize the importance of addressing and resolving the unexpected and extended delay to the delivery of upgraded F-16 multi-role fighters and ground support equipment that we owe to Taiwan.

In August, the F-16 Block 70/72 and F-16V retrofit program Foreign Military Sales (FMS) cases constituted \$12.7 billion of the total \$14.3 billion backlog of military equipment that Taiwan has purchased from the United States. In the case of the F-16V retrofit, the delays for full completion of the program were approaching three years due to the lack of availability for key parts. The F-16 Block 70/72 delivery had been delayed by over 15 months due to software development complexities not anticipated by the original equipment manufacturer.

These are critical programs to improve Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities in the near—mid terms. The F-16V retrofit program includes updates to the aircraft’s radar, targeting systems, and electronic warfare equipment.<sup>3</sup> Taiwan currently has a force of 141 F-16s, the majority of

<sup>1</sup> [Taiwan urges China to stop ‘destructive’ military sorties - The Washington Post](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF#page=154>

<sup>3</sup> [Taiwan commissions first upgraded F-16 fighter wing \(defensenews.com\)](#)

which were delivered in the 1990s and urgently require modernization to remain relevant on the future battlefield.

Further, Taiwan's F-16 Block 70/72 order will deliver 66 new aircraft to replace its current fleet of much less capable and older F-5E/F Tiger II interceptors. While the FMS case was supposed to be completed by 2025-2026, the estimated delivery timeline slipped earlier this year to 2026-2027.

We recognize that these FMS cases were impacted from their earliest inception by optimistic assumptions about how rapidly new technology and modifications might be integrated into the initial F-16 design. Taiwan urgently needs these new and upgraded aircraft, and a stronger, more resilient Taiwan will improve stability across the Taiwan Strait. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that both FMS cases are not further delayed and hope to prevent similarly optimistic technology assumptions from manifesting in the future. We cannot afford to over-promise and under-deliver to our closest friends.

To this end, we applaud several efforts undertaken by the Air Force and Taiwan that are effectively improving these F-16 FMS case timelines. Taiwan has agreed to a spiral development approach that will shorten delays for the F-16 Block 70/72 aircraft, enabled by the production line rightly prioritizing Taiwan aircraft. We are also encouraged by the steps taken by the Air Force to drastically reduce schedule risk for the F-16V retrofit program due to the on-time delivery of parts.

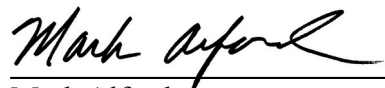
Despite notable improvements, we still consider these F-16 FMS cases to be high-risk. As such, we will continue to monitor these efforts closely, especially related to organizing, staffing, funding, and prioritizing the delivery and ferry flight operations supporting a timely arrival on the island of 66 new F-16 aircraft. Therefore, we respectfully request that you provide a written update on the overall schedule for both F-16V upgrades and production of all F-16 Block 70/72 aircraft by December 18, 2023, to inform our oversight activities in the second session of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. We stand ready to work with you to resolve these setbacks and improve the defense of Taiwan.

Sincerely,



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Robert J. Wittman  
Member of Congress



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Mark Alford  
Member of Congress



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Joe Wilson  
Member of Congress



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Jake LaTurner  
Member of Congress



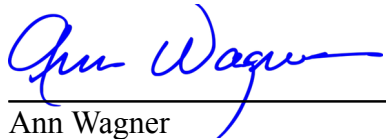
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Ronny L. Jackson  
Member of Congress



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William R. Timmons, IV  
Member of Congress



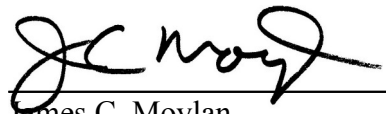
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Ann Wagner  
Member of Congress



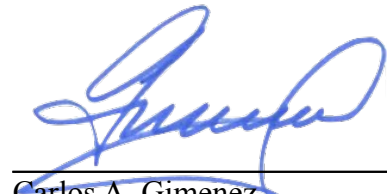
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Michael Waltz  
Member of Congress



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James C. Moylan  
Member of Congress




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Carlos A. Gimenez  
Member of Congress



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Robert B. Aderholt  
Member of Congress



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Ryan K. Zinke  
Member of Congress



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Rich McCormick, MD, MBA  
Member of Congress



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Austin Scott  
Member of Congress



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Lance Gooden  
Member of Congress



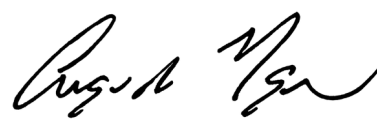
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Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress



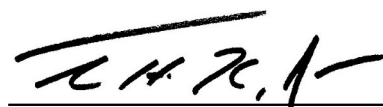
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John R. Carter  
Member of Congress



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August Pfluger  
Member of Congress



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Thomas H. Kean, Jr.  
Member of Congress



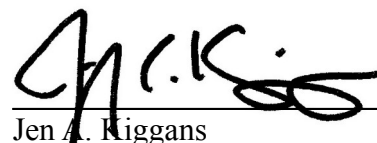
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Michael R. Turner  
Member of Congress



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Don Bacon  
Member of Congress



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Jen A. Kiggans  
Member of Congress



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Brad Finstad  
Member of Congress



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Mike Gallagher  
Member of Congress