

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 8, 2017

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary,

It is our understanding that the Joint Program Office is considering the incorporation of an Automatic Ground Collision Avoidance System (AGCAS) on the F-35 earlier than planned. We strongly support this initiative and urge the armed services to prioritize this technology and work with the F-35 Joint Program Office to move forward as quickly as possible.

Over the last three years, the AGCAS technology has been proven on the F-16 program and has saved the lives of as many as seven pilots since being implemented. AGCAS utilizes precise navigation, aircraft performance, and digital terrain data to automatically maneuver an aircraft to prevent a pending collision with the ground. Controlled flight-into-terrain mishaps have not shown a statistically significant change in 40 years despite many specific mitigation efforts. However, the data seems to show that AGCAS can significantly improve pilot safety. We understand that more than 40% of historical F-16 losses prior to 2014 could have been prevented with AGCAS.

Therefore, introducing this technology now on the F-35 is not only low risk and affordable, but has the potential to save lives. With the needed F-35 production ramp-up underway, now is the time to implement this critical technology. With the amount of high-performance flying occurring in the F-35 fleet across the globe, we owe it to our pilots to provide every protection possible as quickly as feasible. Please let us know what we can do to help the F-35 Joint Program Office move forward on this critical project.

Similarly, we understand that a thorough flight testing program was recently completed at Edwards Air Force Base for Automatic Air Collision Avoidance technology on the F-16, demonstrating Automatic Collision Avoidance Technology is viable beyond ground collision. The Automatic Air Collision Avoidance technology, combined with AGCAS, form the Automatic Integrated Collision Avoidance System, and can be implemented in the current F-16 fleet. Seven pilots and 15 F-16 aircraft have been lost since 1999, and all could have been saved by this technology. We strongly support this program's deployment on the F-16 fielded aircraft as soon as possible.

Thank you for your leadership in bringing the F-35's immense warfighting capability into our fleet and those of our closest allies. There is nothing more important than ensuring our pilots' safety while ensuring our air superiority into the future.

Sincerely,



Steve Knight
Member of Congress



Paul Cook
Member of Congress



Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader



Ken Calvert
Member of Congress