

To Mr. John Warner
Chairman US Senate Committee on Armed Services
225 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC 20510

Date 8 March 2006
Ref M/2006008266
Subject 'Hearing' SASC concerning the JSF-program

Dear Mr. Warner

As a partner in the JSF-program, the Netherlands has been following the discussions related to the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) process and the presidential FY 2007 budget with great interest. Since the JSF program is an international project and the FY 2007 budget is primarily an American affair, I appreciate the fact that the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) has decided to conduct a hearing to get a thorough understanding of the interests of all JSF partner countries. Unfortunately I am not able to attend the hearing in person, but this letter reflects the position of the Netherlands. I will address the FY 2007 subject, but I also take the opportunity to address additional issues of vital importance for the Dutch support of the JSF program.

All partners entered the JSF program with the assumption that two engine programs were an integral part of it. We never anticipated this element of the program to be changed. The Netherlands has always been in favour of two engines in order to keep a competitive edge within the JSF-program.

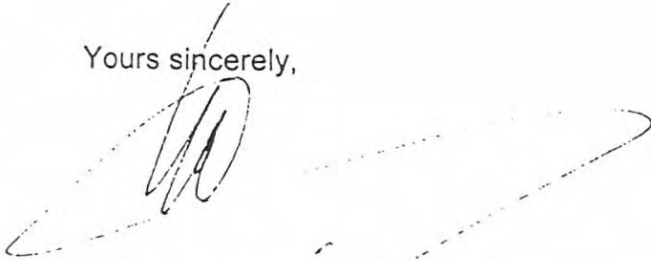
Developing two engines has been a way of achieving that goal. However, current developments in the budgetary arena force the SDD-partners to take a hard look at the expenses of the program. From the Dutch point of view, it is crucial that the JSF program meets product, time and budget constraints. If maintaining two engines in the program implies deleting aircraft capabilities, or a serious slip in the program, or a substantial increase of Partner contribution, or any combination of those events, this will pose a huge problem for the Netherlands. The Netherlands is well aware of the current dilemma and trusts the US government to make the right decisions in this matter.

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As you may have noticed, I used the expression 'partner' several times. The partnership is paramount to the Netherlands. To me, real partnership is proven and achieved by crucial elements, like a common baseline JSF for all partners. Furthermore, by providing a best value program with a level playing field for all partner industries and technology access for all of them in order to enable them to produce world class and best value products. Additionally, equally important is the creation of a European footprint within the logistic support solution to find the right balance between best value and sovereign requirements of all partner nations, supported by the American government and industry. Finally, a concern to the Dutch government is adequate involvement of Dutch pilots in Developmental Test and Operational Test and Evaluation on equal footing with US warriors.

To conclude, I appreciate the initiative of the SASC. I hope the issues I addressed will contribute to the realisation of the program, because that is still the purpose of the Dutch government in order to create and maintain an effective partnership!

Yours sincerely,



Cees van der Knaap
Deputy Secretary of Defense