

**Paul Solomon**  
**3307 Meadow Oak Drive**  
**Westlake Village, CA 91361**  
Paul.solomon@pb-ev.com

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The Hon. Secretary of the Air Force Dr. Troy Meink  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Subj: Use of Digital Engineering on Collaborative Combat Aircraft Program

Dear Hon. Sec. of the Air Force Troy Meink:

The House Committee on Armed Services directed you to brief them on your plans to transition Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) Increment 1 prototypes to full-scale production and the associated resource requirements. Please include in that briefing your plans to meet the intent of the NDAA for FY 2026, Sections 221 and 218 on the CCA program. NDAA excerpts follow:

Section 221—Review and Alignment of Standards, Guidance, and Policies Relating to Digital Engineering (DE). This section would require:

(A) A review of the reference architectures, standards, and best practices for the use of DE tools (including digital twins and digital threads) as in effect at the time of the review, including standards for the use of such tools at all stages of program design, development, and testing.

(B) Identification of the current standards guiding the use of such DE engineering tools, at all stages of program design, development, and testing.

(D) Identification of best practices for DE within each such Armed Force.

(E) Recommendations for improvements to the use of DE tools in each such Armed Force.

SEC. 218. ALTERNATIVE TEST AND EVALUATION PATHWAY FOR DESIGNATED DEFENSE ACQUISITION PROGRAMS. requires the Secretary of War to incorporate, to the maximum extent practicable, best practices such as integration of supporting or complementary data from digital twins or other model-based systems engineering tools.

My letter to you, Subj: Unfinished Business to Institutionalize DE, dated November 3, 2025, included the following excerpt:

**DE and Richardson**

My letter to Sec. War Hegseth, Subj: Unfinished Business with former USD(R&E) Heidi Shyu and with F-35 and F-47 Programs, dated March 23, 2025, included the following excerpt:

**Unfinished Business, Air Force**

I received a letter from Gen. Duke Richardson when he was at SAF/AQ. He wrote:

The Department of the Air Force supports Ms. Shyu and her goals to modernize systems engineering processes while leveraging digital engineering and model-based systems engineering. I have provided a copy of your letter and white paper *Integrating the Embedded Software Path, MBSE, and DE with Program Management* to my staff for their consideration as they modernize acquisition policy to take full advantage of digital engineering and to enable the use of digital artifacts that accelerate our development, manufacturing, sustainment, and operations of warfighter capabilities. We agree the institutionalization of “going digital” must include program management if we are to be successful. We are collaborating with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to improve current directives, instructions, and guides to evolve systems engineering and program management practices with regards to utilization of digital engineering and model-based acquisition. Your recommendations are appreciated.

Thank you again for sending a copy of your letter and recommendations. The Department of the Air Force is fully committed to improving our warfighter’s capability, and we recognize digital engineering is vital to maintaining our dominance in air, space, and cyberspace.

Gen. Richardson committed to take full advantage of DE and to enable the use of digital artifacts, including integrating program management with DE. In your briefing, please inform the HASC of your plans to meet his commitment and the NDAA provisions on CCA Increment 1, including best practices for the use of DE tools (including digital twins and digital threads).

Yours truly,



Paul J. Solomon

CC:

Hon. Adam Smith, HASC

Hon. Mike Turner, HASC

Hon. Mike Rogers, HASC

Hon. David Norquist NDIA

Hon. Roger Wicker, SASC

Hon. Michael Duffey, USD

Russell Vought, Director, OMB

Hon. Dep. Sec. of War Stephen Feinberg

Hon. SON John Phelan

Hon. USD Emil Michael

Hon. Gen. B. Chance Saltzman, U.S. Space Force

Hon. Pete Hegseth, Sec. of War

Hon. Dan Driscoll, Sec. of the Army

Anthony Capaccio, Bloomberg News