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July 23, 2026

The Honorable Mark Kelly  
Hart Senate Office Building  
Suite 516  
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Oversight of F-35 Program and Gen. Masiello's Silence on GAO Recommendations

Dear Hon. Sen. Kelly:

This letter augments my letter, Subj: Markups for NDAA for FY 2027, dated April 8, 2026. I had stated that "nothing has been done to improve how we acquire major capabilities from traditional contractors. Also, more needs to be done regarding digital engineering, outcome-based metrics, and accountability for all acquisitions."

These topics are relevant to your oversight of the F-35 program. Lt. Gen. Masiello failed to address them in his testimony regarding Block 4 and TR-3 Modernization at your subcommittee hearing on June 23, 2026. His testimony was silent on the following recommendations in GAO report, GAO-25-107632 F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, dated Sept. 2025:

The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)) should ensure that the F-35 program's Block 4 and engine and power thermal management modernization (EPM) major subprograms expand the use of the leading practices for product development, such as developing a minimum viable product, pursuing digital twins that can be used to inform development, and updating modeling and simulation tools in real time. (Recommendation 5).

The USD(A&S) should ensure that the F-35 program formalizes its plan to incorporate leading practices for product development in its Block 4 and EPM major subprogram acquisition documentation. (Recommendation 6).

I had cited those issues in my letter to HASC Vice Chairman Robert Wittman, Subj: Limit F-35 Procurements Until Digital Engineering and Outcome-based Metrics are Certified, dated June 16, 2024. However, the deficiencies are chronic. The Wittman letter cites my email to Sen. McCain, dated August 28, **2016**, regarding Block 3 functionality.

I had supported Sen. McCain on F-35 oversight for several years and received the following letter from him on March 5, 2015:

Dear Mr. Solomon,

I want to thank you for your letter concerning the cost over runs and mismanagement of the F-35 Program. As you are aware we have worked hard in the previous years at reigning in excessive cost growth and holding manufacturers responsible for their performance. Acquisitions reform is one of the top priorities of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress.

The need to reform the Department of Defense acquisitions process is universally acknowledged. Since 1949 numerous studies have been conducted with varying recommendations and degrees of success. The past decade has brought new challenges to the responsiveness and length of the process. Our focus of effort for this Congress will be to provide accountability and arrest the growth in cost and schedule. We must do this in order to achieve a sustainable future for government acquisitions.

Again, I appreciate your continued efforts in working to improve our acquisitions process. Feel free to contact my staff at (202)224-2235 with further information.

Sincerely,



John McCain  
United States Senator

During your oversight, please determine if any corrective actions were taken by the USD(A&S) regarding the GAO recommendations. Your website states, "He continues the legacy of Arizona Senators, like John McCain and Barry Goldwater." If you want to take up Sen. McCain's mantle, I would be glad to support your oversight and acquisition reform efforts.

Yours truly,



Paul Solomon

CC:

Hon. Dep. Sec. Stephen Feinberg  
Hon. Adam Smith, HASC  
Hon. Mike Rogers, HASC  
Hon. Roger Wicker, SASC  
Hon. Russell Vought, Director, OMB  
Hon. Gen. Saltzman, U.S. Space Force  
Hon. Dan Driscoll, Sec. of the Army  
Anthony Capaccio, Bloomberg News  
Hon. Sen. Andy Kim

Hon. Acting Sec. of the Navy Hung Cao  
Shelby Oakley, GAO  
Hon. David Norquist NDIA  
Hon. Troy Meink, Sec. of the AF  
Hon. Asst. Sec. of War for Industrial Base Policy, Michael Cadenazzi  
Hon. Pete Hegseth, Sec. of War  
Hon. DOW CIO Kirsten Davies  
Hon. USW(A&S) Michael Duffey  
Hon. USW(R&E) Emil Michael