



March 2, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301



Dear Secretary Austin,

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to forgo requesting funding for a second engine for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) in the Department of Defense's (DOD) fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget request or in the "unfunded priorities" list provided to members of Congress.



The JSF Block 4 upgrades [including](#) advanced electronic capabilities, improved targeting, and extra missile capacity have driven the need for additional cooling in the engine. Rather than relying on the Adaptive Engine Technology Program (AETP), it would be far more practical and cost-effective for both the DOD and taxpayers to modify the existing F135 engine.



Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall [testified](#) in April 2022 that it would cost \$6 billion to get the AETP engine into production, but the Air Force has [yet to release](#) a budget breakout of costs. Pratt & Whitney, which developed the F135 used in all variants of the JSF, has [estimated](#) that the upgrades that are included in its Engine Core Upgrade (ECU) could provide the same capability for approximately one-third of the cost of the AETP. The company has estimated that the upgrade would save \$40 billion in total lifecycle costs.



The ECU is the better course to pursue for several additional reasons. The AETP would not meet the needs of the entire JSF fleet. It is incompatible with the F-35B variant, and would [require](#) substantial airframe modifications to fit into the F-35A and F-35C. Employing a second engine would create a second supply chain, and complicate maintenance and sustainment. It would also divert money from much-needed modernization efforts across the Air Force, and make the JSF program, which already suffers from a poor readiness rate, even harder to maintain. Together with Congress, the DOD ultimately made the correct decision by defunding the alternate engine for the JSF in FY 2011. Resurrecting a second engine for the JSF should not even be considered.



Again, we urge you to forgo requesting funding for the ATEP in the DOD's FY 2024 budget request and in the unfunded priorities list presented to Congress.

Sincerely,

Tom Schatz  
President  
Council for Citizens Against Government Waste

Saulius "Saul" Anuzis  
President  
60 Plus Association

James L. Martin  
Founder/Chairman  
60 Plus Association

George Landrith  
President  
Frontiers of Freedom

Pete Sepp  
President  
National Taxpayers Union

Stephen Ellis  
President  
Taxpayers for Common Sense

David Williams  
President  
Taxpayers Protection Alliance