

**Washington D.C.** - Today, Congressmen McCarthy and McKeon sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates expressing concern about reports that the Administration's Fiscal Year 2010 budget may include funding cuts for the Airborne Laser (ABL) Program.

*"The Airborne Laser program is on the cutting edge of our nation's self-defense," said Congressman McCarthy.*

*"In a time of global challenges, I am concerned the Administration is being short-sighted by considering significant budget cuts to our defense budget. I will continue to work with my friend Buck McKeon and other Members of Congress to support the Airborne Laser program being tested at Edwards Air Force Base to strengthen our nation's defense."*

*"The benefits of the Airborne Laser technology are great and far-reaching," said McKeon.*

*"America's ability to destroy a missile cloaked with a chemical, biological, or nuclear warhead on enemy territory serves as a great disincentive against a hostile enemy attack. And ABL's ability to engage a target with multiple shots or to identify and shoot at multiple targets gives it a great advantage as well."*

*"Further development in weapon-laser technology will have additional applications that will be beneficial to American national security in the future. A reliable weaponized laser that shoots precisely focused bullets of light traveling at 186,000 miles per second promises to be useful for other missions beyond the scope of missile defense."*

*"I am proud of the work being done in my congressional district at Edwards Air Force Base by our dedicated engineers and employees. Representative Kevin McCarthy and I strongly encourage Secretary Gates to support funding for this technology, so our country can build upon the progress already made."*

Related:

Airborne Laser fires tracking laser, hits target  
(Edwards AFB)

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123045745>

Full of Text of Letter:

Dear Secretary Gates:

We are greatly concerned by reports that the Airborne Laser (ABL) program is facing severe budget cuts or even termination in the Fiscal Year 2010 Budget proposal. The ABL is America's premier directed energy effort and represents not only a tremendous potential for our nation's warfighters, but also for maintaining America's technological edge. It is critical to the future of our national security capabilities. For these reasons, we urgently request the ABL remain a robustly funded program.

According to the Missile Defense Agency, the ABL provides a unique capability "to detect, track, target, and destroy ballistic missiles shortly after launch during the boost-phase. Its revolutionary use of directed energy makes it unique among the United States' airborne weapon systems, with a potential to attack multiple targets at the speed of light with a range of hundreds of kilometers."

Our military warfighters agree that the ABL is essential for addressing many of the challenges facing our nation. General B.B. Bell, the former Commander of the United States Forces Korea, wrote in 2007, "...from a warfighter's perspective, the ABL will be an important ingredient in our much needed and required layered missile defense capability for the Korean Peninsula." This is a legitimate capability our nation needs.

As you know, the Airborne Laser began during the Clinton administration in the face of an increasing ballistic missile threat. Since that time, the proliferation of ballistic missiles has only grown. Today, outside of Russia, China and our Western allies, there are 3,000 ballistic missiles around the world. That number is continuing to grow every year. As threats proliferate around the globe, the relevance and importance of the ABL as the nation's only fully designed boost-phase missile defense system will continue to increase.

The ABL is performing well and is scheduled to shoot down a boosting ballistic missile by the end of the year. Should the ABL be severely under-funded or canceled, the promise of speed-of-light and extreme precision in the hands of the warfighter will disappear, as will the fragile industrial base that supports it. In short, we will have wasted the resources that have been well invested since the Clinton administration.

Again, we respectfully request your support for the Airborne Laser program.

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