

US House of Representatives Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton today released the following statement on the Department of Defense's update of the Joint Strike Fighter/F-35 competitive engine cost-benefit analysis:

"Yesterday, I was finally provided with a copy of the 'business case' upon which Secretary Gates based his decision to oppose the development of the competitive engine for the F-35. While the committee is still reviewing the analysis, it appears that the Department's approach focuses on near-term costs to the exclusion of what the committee sees as the long-term benefits of this program. The costs of the second engine in the next few years must be balanced against the fact that life-cycle costs of having two engines are comparable to having only one. The Department's analysis does not consider the risk that a single engine would present not only to our fighter force, but to our national security, given that the F-35 will account for 95 percent of our nation's fighter fleet. With this program, as with all others, we cannot use near-sighted vision when long-term security is at stake. I look forward to continuing the dialogue on this program with my colleagues and the Department of Defense. But I remain unconvinced that terminating the alternate engine program makes sense."