



Defence Committee

Chair, Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP

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Jeremy Quin MP
Minister for Defence Procurement
Ministry of Defence
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26 August 2020

Dear Minister,

I am writing for an update on the F-35 programme, following reports in the press that current target of purchasing 138 aircraft could be significantly reduced to around 70. A reduction of this scale would significantly reduce the RAF's ability to patrol our skies, operate two aircraft carriers and meet overseas commitments. It also suggests that the MOD is being asked to make difficult decisions in trimming our defence posture before we have established what our vision and place in the world aspires to be. I would therefore be grateful for answers to the following questions:

1. Has there been a decision on how many F-35's the UK will buy overall?
2. What has been the impact of Covid-19 on:
 - F-35 aircraft deliveries to the UK?
 - The overall availability rates of UK F-35 aircraft?
 - The support costs of UK F-35s?
 - The wider impact on delivery of the carrier strike capability?
3. In the US, the F-35 appears to be in a condition of continuous development, first to meet the specifications laid down in the original requirement and then to take it further.
 - a. Will the prices to be charged to the UK avoid any charges for the getting the aircraft to the original specified performance?

- b. What arrangements have been made or under consideration for the further upgrades that the US will introduce for its own fleet?
4. As the US moves from ALIS to the USAF-owned support system ODIN, what will the UK position be?
5. Has there been a decision to fund deployable spares package for the second squadron?
6. What has been the impact on the UK of Turkey's exclusion from the programme?

We would be grateful for a response by **14 September 2020**.

P.P. Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair of the Defence Committee