

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 4027

To recognize the historical achievements, the ongoing service, and to make a priority recapitalization of the frontline and surge fighter forces at active-duty Air Force bases.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 17, 2025

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina (for himself and Mr. EDWARDS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

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## A BILL

To recognize the historical achievements, the ongoing service, and to make a priority recapitalization of the frontline and surge fighter forces at active-duty Air Force bases.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Frontline Fighter  
5       Force First Act”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       Congress makes the following findings:

8               (1) Ensuring that the United States military  
9       remains the strongest fighting force in the world re-

1       quires a highly mission capable frontline fighter fleet  
2       across fourth, fifth, and next-generation platforms.

3           (2) In particular, fighter wings that deploy at  
4       least 50 percent of the time, including the 335th  
5       operational squadron at Seymour Johnson Air Force  
6       Base, are on the frontlines of the fight for freedom.

7           (3) At the same time, with declining mission ca-  
8       pable rates, including 55 percent for the F-15E  
9       fleet, prioritizing recapitalization of legacy aircraft  
10      with aging equipment and engines like the Block  
11      220 F-15Es must be a priority for the U.S. Air  
12      Force. By recapitalizing active-duty bases with up-  
13      graded fourth generation aircraft like the F-15EX  
14      to replace the legacy fleet, the U.S. can fulfill its  
15      mission to sustain optimal mission readiness.

16          (4) Further, that recognizing the historical con-  
17      tributions of Strike Eagle aircraft at a time when  
18      they continue to deliver unmatched payload capa-  
19      bility and range in active theaters, including  
20      CENTCOM, is a high congressional priority.

21          (5) F-15E aircraft can carry up to 12 unique  
22      missiles, an unrivaled combination of heavy payload  
23      and long range with stealth capability.

24          (6) Since their first combat flight, F-15Es  
25      boast an undefeated 104-0 winning record in Air-to-

1 Air missions across the Persian Gulf, Iraqi, and  
2 counterterrorism operations in the CENTCOM  
3 AOR.

4 (7) During the Iraq War, F-15E Strike Eagles  
5 from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in Golds-  
6 boro, North Carolina, played a significant role, de-  
7 ploying for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

8 (8) Then, on April 13, 2024, with only 24  
9 hours to prepare ahead of an unprecedented ballistic  
10 missile attack from Iran, airmen from the 335th  
11 operational squadron, under command of the 4th  
12 Fighter Wing based at Seymour Johnson deployed  
13 in four F-15Es that alone intercepted more than  
14 two dozen of the one-way attack drones fired at  
15 Israel and U.S. military personnel based in the re-  
16 gion. They defended our coalition partners, including  
17 Israel, embodying the true essence of service.

18 (9) To commemorate their courage, General  
19 Ken Wilsbach, commander of Air Combat Com-  
20 mand, awarded airmen from the 4th Fighter Wing  
21 high-level decorations during a ceremony at Seymour  
22 Johnson Air Force Base. The airmen were recog-  
23 nized for their rapid response and valiant perform-  
24 ance in the largest air-to-air engagement in over 50  
25 years. Those heroes, receiving well-deserved decora-

1 tions and surrounded by their families, have right-  
2 fully earned our nation's deep gratitude. To fighter  
3 pilots, maintainers, and all airmen that keep the F-  
4 15E fleet alive and well, Congress must continue to  
5 uplift the power of the E platform, including up-  
6 graded F-15EX fighters.

7 **SEC. 3. RECAPITALIZATION OF AIR FORCE ACTIVE DUTY**  
8 **FRONTLINE FIGHTER FORCE.**

9 (a) **PROCUREMENT OF FIGHTER AIRCRAFT.—**

10 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of the Air  
11 Force shall take such steps as may be necessary to  
12 ensure the continued production and procurement of  
13 at least one model of advanced capability fighter air-  
14 craft until the date on which the Secretary certifies  
15 to the congressional defense committees that the  
16 Secretary has replaced all legacy capability fighter  
17 aircraft within each Air Combat Command Fighter  
18 Wing with an advanced capability fighter aircraft,  
19 with replacements made sequentially, starting with  
20 fighter squadrons that deploy at least 30 percent of  
21 the time.

22 (2) **CONTRACTS.**—For purposes of fulfilling the  
23 requirements of paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

1 (A) seek to enter into a contract for the  
2 procurement of advanced capability fighter air-  
3 craft; or

4 (B) modify a contract to provide for the  
5 procurement of additional advanced capability  
6 fighter aircraft.

7 (3) GAO REVIEW AND REPORT.—

8 (A) REVIEW.—The Comptroller General of  
9 the United States shall conduct a review of ad-  
10 vanced capability fighter aircraft. Such review  
11 shall include—

12 (i) an assessment of any challenges to  
13 the procurement of such aircraft by the  
14 Secretary; and

15 (ii) recommendations on how to solve  
16 such challenges.

17 (B) BRIEFING.—Not later than one year  
18 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the  
19 Comptroller General shall provide to the con-  
20 gressional defense committees a briefing on the  
21 preliminary findings of the review conducted  
22 under subparagraph (A).

23 (C) REPORT.—Not later than 30 days  
24 after the Comptroller General provides a brief-  
25 ing under subparagraph (B), the Comptroller

1 General shall submit to the congressional de-  
2 fense committees a final report on the review  
3 conducted under subparagraph (A).

4 (4) REPORT ON PROGRESS.—Not later than  
5 180 days after the Comptroller General provides a  
6 report under paragraph (3)(C) and on an annual  
7 basis thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the  
8 congressional defense committees a report on the  
9 progress of the Secretary in—

10 (A) implementing the recommendations of  
11 the Comptroller General issued pursuant to  
12 paragraph (3); and

13 (B) replacing the legacy capability fighter  
14 aircraft within each Air Combat Command  
15 Fighter Wing with an advanced capability fight-  
16 er aircraft, fifth generation fighter aircraft, or  
17 next-generation air dominance fighter aircraft.

18 (b) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

19 (1) The term “advanced capability fighter air-  
20 craft” means a Block 70/72 variant or later variant  
21 of the F-16 fighter aircraft, an F-15EX fighter air-  
22 craft, an F-35 fighter aircraft, an F-47 fighter air-  
23 craft, any future variant of such fighter aircraft, or  
24 any other more advanced capability fighter aircraft  
25 identified by the Secretary.

1           (2) The term “congressional defense commit-  
2       tees” has the meaning given such term in section  
3       101(a)(16) of title 10, United States Code.

4           (3) The term “covered Air Combat Command  
5       Fighter Wing” means any fighter unit of the Air  
6       Force with respect to which the Secretary has not  
7       commenced or completed the process of replacing the  
8       legacy capability fighter aircraft of such unit with  
9       advanced capability fighter aircraft or fifth genera-  
10      tion aircraft as of the date of the enactment of this  
11      Act.

12          (4) The term “fifth generation” has the mean-  
13      ing given such term in section 154(d)(2) of the Na-  
14      tional Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year  
15      2025 (Public Law 118–159).

16          (5) The term “fighter aircraft” has the mean-  
17      ing given such term in section 9062(i)(2) of title 10,  
18      United States Code.

19          (6) The term “legacy capability fighter air-  
20      craft” has the meaning given such term in section  
21      154(d)(4) of the National Defense Authorization Act  
22      for Fiscal Year 2025 (Public Law 118–159).

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