

Budget cuts endanger military aircraft

HIGHLIGHTS

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Anyone who has met a man or woman in uniform knows this uptick in accidents has nothing to do with the quality of our recruits. Only the most disciplined and devoted make it through the rigorous program to become pilots. This is a failure of our system.

Military leaders have testified before Congress that they know exactly where the blame lies — with budget cuts. They noted a direct correlation between reduced training budgets, the use of aging aircraft and parts, delayed maintenance and the resulting increase in accidents.

The continually deployed Navy-Marine Corps team has felt the budget ax most keenly. In less than two years, over \$1 billion in damages have piled up for the service and, worse yet, the Marines have lost the most lives with the January collision of two helicopters off Hawaii.

Arbitrary budget cuts, starting with sequestration in 2013 and through the current Bipartisan Budget Act, put dollars before lives and budgets before security. They have created a maintenance gap and aircraft shortage that has had a direct impact on the ability of the Navy and Marine Corps to train appropriately.

We cannot stand by as our military is forced to fly in broken and old aircraft. We need greater investment in newer equipment, more planes for training and greater funding for maintenance.

Talk to your senators, to your congressman and demand greater funding for the Navy-Marine Corps team.

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