

House panel OKs alternative engine money

June 12, 2009

Congressional lawmakers Friday approved \$603 million for the production of an alternative engine for the Joint Strike Fighter F-35.

The House Armed Services Air and Land Forces Subcommittee voted to fund the GE-Rolls Royce venture, which is competing with engine maker Pratt & Whitney, the Hill reported Friday. That company is building the primary engine for the Joint Strike Fighter.

The newspaper noted that when President Barack Obama announced his budget request for 2010 in May, he singled out the alternative engine contract as an unnecessary defense program that "does nothing to keep us safe."

House members said they disagreed with the president's assessment.

"If everything proceeds as planned for the Joint Strike Fighter program, the F-35 will compose the vast majority of the fighter force for the Navy, Marine Corps and the Air Force 20 years from now," said Rep. Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii, chairman of the Air and Land Forces panel.

"This issue is not about Contractor A or Contractor B. The issue is that we do not believe that it is prudent for up to 80 to 90 percent of the fighter fleet to be dependent on a single engine type, provided by one manufacturer," Abercrombie added.