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House Panel Votes to Keep the F-22 Jet Fighter Alive

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WASHINGTON — Led by Republicans, the House Armed Services Committee voted 31 to 30 on Wednesday to keep the Pentagon's advanced F-22 fighter jet alive.

The committee chairman, Representative Ike Skelton, Democrat of Missouri, and the chairman of the air and land forces subcommittee, Representative Neil Abercrombie, Democrat of Hawaii, both voted against the measure, which would set aside \$369 million to buy parts to build 12 more of the fighters.

The Obama administration has said it wants to quit building the plane, and House aides said its supporters would face a struggle to win approval for the money in the rest of the House and the Senate.

The vote came as the plane's supporters have also been talking up the idea of selling the fighter to Japan and other allies.

The Japanese government recently expressed interest in buying as many as 40 F-22s, which are built by Lockheed Martin. But Pentagon officials have said there are substantial obstacles to any such sales.

Given the plane's crucial stealth technologies, Congress would have to overturn a law that bans any exports. And if the ban were removed, Japan might have to pay \$1 billion to \$2 billion to cover removing some of the highly classified technology.

Many Republicans have opposed the administration's plan to halt construction at 187 planes, saying that more are needed as insurance against potential conflicts with major powers.

But critics have described the planes, which cost \$200 million each and have not been used in the Iraq or Afghanistan wars, as cold war relics that are no longer affordable.

The House committee's vote for the \$369 million in advanced procurement spending came on an amendment, proposed by Representative Rob Bishop, Republican of Utah, to a broader spending bill. It shifted the funds for cleaning up environmental hazards on military bases.