



Senator Feinstein Tours C-17 Plant, Calls on Administration to Continue Production

*Future of more than 5,000 workers employed at the plant at stake
as Congress deliberates funding of the C-17*

April 17, 2006

Long Beach, Calif. – *As she toured Boeing’s C-17 manufacturing plant in Long Beach, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today called on the Bush Administration to continue production of C-17 Globemaster III Airlifters.*

Senator Feinstein recently worked to get the Senate Appropriations Committee to approve \$227.5 million in the FY 2006 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill, which should pave the way for additional C-17 aircraft orders.

In recent Congressional testimony, Air Force Chief of Staff General Michael Moseley said the C-17 has been “worth its weight in gold.” On March 20, the C-17 reached its 1 millionth flying hour while evacuating injured U.S. troops from Iraq to Germany.

Following is the prepared text of Senator Feinstein’s statement:

“It is great to be here with you in Long Beach. It is great to visit this world-class, award-winning manufacturing facility. And it’s especially great to meet the people who build the C-17 Globemaster, the greatest cargo aircraft ever constructed.

From the management team, to the engineers, and the production and maintenance workers, you are to be commended for making this one of the most successful and valuable programs for our U.S. military.

On March 20, the C-17 reached its 1 millionth flying hour while evacuating injured U.S. troops from Iraq to Germany. This is a landmark. It is equal to one cargo jet flying every minute nonstop for more than 114 years. And, a few days earlier, on March 16, the C-17 completed a record-setting humanitarian mission by airdropping 32,400 pounds of aid to four locations in central and eastern Afghanistan in just 40 minutes.

While most people think of the C-17 transport as a combat-support aircraft, this workhorse is also the star of our humanitarian and peacekeeping missions both at home and abroad. Recent examples include delivering aid and emergency supplies to Asia after the Tsunami, to Pakistan after the earthquake, and to our fellow Americans after hurricanes devastated the Gulf Coast last year.

The C-17 has also been essential to our combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in our global fight against terror. As the most versatile and flexible transport aircraft in our Air Force, the C-17 is critical to the forward deployment of troops and cargo, can perform airlift and airdrop missions, and has been a vital component of aero-medical evacuations.

In fact, the C-17 has been so successful flying missions in the Middle East region that the Air Force is now using it instead of other available aircraft. And, while it comprises only 55 percent of the strategic airlift fleet, the C-17 is currently flying 80 percent of all strategic airlift missions. No wonder Air Force Chief of Staff General Moseley says the C-17 has been “worth its weight in gold.”

There are some seeking to close the line down. Well, I am here to say that I will do everything in my power to prevent this from happening. Just last week in the Senate Appropriations Committee, we added \$227.5 million to this program to help keep the C-17 going.

I know that this is just a down payment on the total amount that is needed. But this sends a very strong signal to the Pentagon and to the Administration that our warfighters need more C-17s. We in congress want more C-17s, and the air force needs these planes.

Although the President’s FY 2007 Defense Budget has plans to shut down the C-17 line, the air force knows better and has requested 7 additional C-17s as one of its top unfunded priorities.

Right now, the Defense Department is only planning to buy 180 aircraft. Building these aircraft could be completed as early as 2008. So in the Senate Appropriations Committee, we voted to provide the \$227.5 million in the FY06 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill to pave the way for additional C-17 orders.

But this \$227.5 million isn’t enough. I have also requested that the \$433 million that the President proposed to shut down the C-17 line be redirected for more long-lead funding. Without this money, the materials and items that take a long time to manufacture won’t be ready when we in Congress succeed in adding even more money to building C-17 aircraft number 181 and beyond!

I know that you’ll agree with me, the Administration must build more C-17s. They can’t play budget games with the most valuable cargo aircraft in our military’s inventory.

While I am pleased to hear that the Royal Australian Air Force is seeking to buy 4 C-17s, and that British and NATO forces are also considering placing orders for the aircraft, foreign buyers are not enough.

We live in a time of uncertainty. No one knows how many C-17s we will need. And no one knows the dangers that lie ahead. We cannot afford to close the C-17 plant until we can be certain that we have all the C-17s we and our allies need.

Thanks for the great job you are doing here for America and for the men and women in the United States armed forces.

Keep up the great work, and I will keep working in Washington to build more c-17s!