

I'm currently serving in the Air National Guard, and I've served a total of 29 years in the military thus far. My main duty is to keep KC-135 aircraft flying. Over the years, I've been deployed to multiple locations, including Qatar, Oman, and Turkey. Being familiar with the Patriot surface-to-air missile system, I can say that soldiers feel good knowing we have that type of modern defense technology on our side. With the defensive missile batteries in place, we don't have anything exploding next to us. As such, it's imperative that the system is continually upgraded, and the Army is committed to doing that through 2048.

Of course, updating systems takes money, and top military commanders are asking Congress to include funds for the Patriot within the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). That money is crucial for our overseas troops because they are not entirely protected as they should be right now. While there are many variables involved in defending soldiers, the Patriot missiles are a big help in forward operating locations. And, Congress must understand that those who go into harm's way to defend our nation deserve only the very best.

Some of the American public doesn't realize that their freedoms are a direct result of the suffering and price paid by so many American soldiers. Without proper congressional support, our military technologies will be lackluster, and we will see a decline in force-readiness, along with a decline in the military's ability to carry out its role to defend the nation. Ultimately, it would cause a chain reaction that may lead to some very bad circumstances.

While the Patriot is not the cure-all for troop protection, it deserves the utmost respect from Congress for the role it plays. That means Congress must satisfy its constitutional role to protect Americans by ensuring the Army has the required funds to execute its Patriot modernization plans. We simply must invest today for what we are planning for tomorrow, and that starts with reversing the Senate Appropriations Committee's error of slashing funds for the Patriot program. There's still time to get that done before the release of the upcoming NDAA.