

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 17, 2016

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Carter:

As you review recommendations from the Services and work to finalize the Fiscal Year 2018 defense budget request, we urge you to continue to prioritize UH-60 Black Hawk modernization, as has done time and again for this versatile and vital aircraft that has become the backbone of Army Aviation. When the Army was forced to balance budgetary constraints with the need to support continued deployments and replace aging aircraft, the Aviation Restructuring Initiative (ARI) was developed to economize the force while maintaining capability and utility by rebalancing aircraft between the Active and Reserve components. Following recommendations issued by the National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA), we are concerned that attempts to reconcile the ARI plan and NCFA recommendations in future budgets may lead to harmful reductions in planned UH-60M procurement, delaying and in some cases denying needed capabilities to active duty and National Guard forces.

The Department of Defense is already confronting funding challenges in a time of budgetary constraints. As you know, the proposed Fiscal Year 2017 Army Aviation programs – which includes the Black Hawk – faced a decrease of \$2.3 billion from what was enacted in Fiscal Year 2016. Noticeably, this included a decrease in Black Hawk production by 24 helicopters from what had been planned a year prior. Such significant cuts to Black Hawks risks not only the readiness of the units that fly them – including National Guard units still flying Vietnam-era airframes – but also threatens to damage future program affordability. Large volume purchases, delivered through multi-year procurement agreements for the UH-60M, require budgetary predictability and sufficient quantities to maintain economies of scale, and we must work to support this certainty for our Armed Forces. In an attempt to remedy the Fiscal Year 2017 shortfall, the Army included 36 helicopters on its Unfunded Requests List, and we are working to secure strong funding to ensure stable funding for the year. We hope that the Fiscal Year 2018 proposed budget will contain the funding necessary for at least the 60 UH-60Ms, as projected in current Army budget documents.

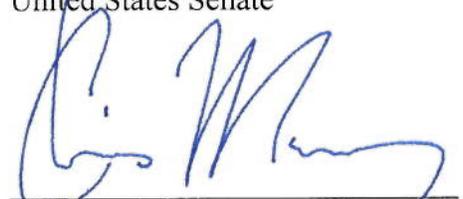
As you continue to shape the Fiscal Year 2018 to 2022 budget strategy, we urge you to consider our concerns, as Black Hawk procurement should not be placed at risk in the years to come. We request that you provide us with a status report as soon as possible on your review of Army Aviation modernization plans. In particular, we seek further information on efforts to ensure a strong and reliable multi-year procurement strategy for the UH-60M in order to give our

warfighters much needed capabilities, while also ensuring a stable industrial base. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you on this critical component of Army Aviation modernization.

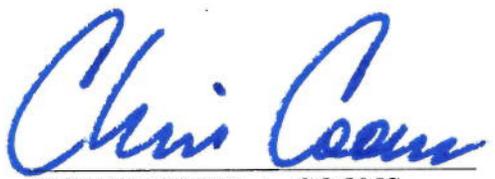
Sincerely,


RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate


ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress


CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate


EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate

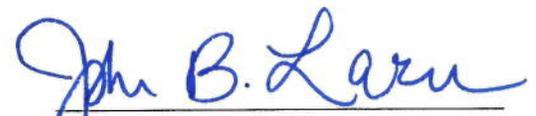

CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senate

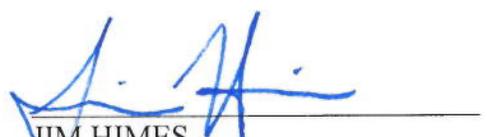

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