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United States Senate

March 05, 2018

The Honorable Heather Wilson
Secretary of the Air Force
U.S. Department of Defense
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

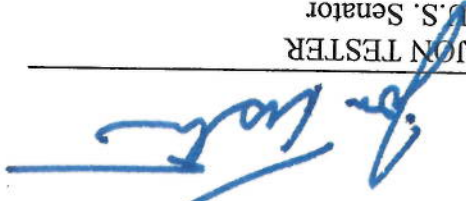
Dear Secretary Wilson:

We have increasing concern about the timeline for the program replacement of the UH-1N Huey helicopter fleet. As you know, this program has been riddled with delays and continues to remain in source-selection. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has until 23 May 2018 to respond to a recent pre-award protest that complicates the recapitalization effort and likely will delay fielding of the UH-1N replacement helicopter still further.

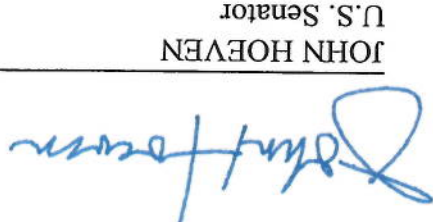
Over a year and a half has passed since we expressed concerns about the capabilities and inefficiencies of the UH-1N fleet. At that time, we urged the Air Force to purchase replacement airframes using an existing Army contract for HH-60 Black Hawks in order to replace the UH-1N as quickly as possible. The Air Force ultimately decided to forego that option, delaying the replacement for years, and yet we are no closer to replacing these aircraft today. The Vietnam-era UH-1Ns continue to operate on national security waivers because they are incapable of meeting speed, range, payload, armament, and survivability requirements. Despite these deficiencies, given the program's track record, we have low confidence that the Air Force will award a contract during Fiscal Year 2018. With more than \$288 million set aside for research, development, testing and evaluation for the UH-1N replacement program, along with significant associated military construction funding and an additional \$8.88 million for continued service life extension program upgrades to the UH-1N in your Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposal, we need a clear understanding of the Air Force's ability to execute the replacement program. We therefore request you provide us as soon as possible with a written timeline for making a contract award in light of the recent pre-award protest, along with any proposals that would accelerate the fielding of replacement aircraft.

At a time when our nation is upgrading our nuclear arsenal due to the increased global threats and near peer adversaries, we cannot afford to continue delaying additional capabilities to secure our ICBM fields. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



JON TESTER
U.S. Senator



JOHN HOEVEN
U.S. Senator

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