

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3809

April 14, 2016

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 2051

Dear Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith,

We write to urge that the Committee direct the United States Air Force (USAF) to conduct a fair and open competition to replace its fleet of UH-1N helicopters. As you know, the USAF identified the need to replace the venerable "Huey" as early as 2004.

In 2010 the USAF suggested that the requirement to replace its UH-1N aircraft created such urgency that the service considered issuing a sole-source contract to one manufacturer. Thanks in part to strong feedback and direction from Congress, the USAF rightly elected to compete the program.

Now, six years later, the USAF is again contemplating a sole-source award, citing a new "sense of urgency." Had the USAF held a competition when the requirement was first identified those aircraft would be operating today. It is our collective view that a terrible precedent would be set if services were allowed to justify sole-source acquisitions by citing a sense of urgency due in part to a failure to properly plan and execute against known requirements. The House Armed Service Committee has been a champion for competition and it should continue to be.

The rotorcraft industrial base is alive and well in the U.S. and it is important to the signatories of this letter that it remains robust and competitive. It is our understanding that companies invested heavily in the development of their platforms to meet the USAF need first identified more than a decade ago. A sole-source Huey replacement will send the wrong message to U.S. industry and negatively impact domestic job growth. Moreover, such a decision could have a devastating impact on companies investing in risk-reduction activities and independent research and development.

One of the key messages used by supporters of sole-sourcing a Huey replacement is expediency. As you both know, the process to sole-source is not instantaneous, and many of the steps required to hold a competition are similar. The good news is that the USAF has already done some work to prepare for competition, so it will not be starting from scratch. Furthermore, one of the many benefits of competition is the fact that a bidder may offer a far more aggressive

schedule, perhaps even able to deliver assets as soon or even earlier than what the USAF could obtain through a sole-source procurement.

Each of us acknowledge the critical missions performed by these aircraft and are fully supportive of an expeditious acquisition based on competition that is fair and open. And as we have an obligation to the men and women of our Armed Services, we also have a responsibility to American taxpayers to be good stewards of their money. A number of options exist in the marketplace that would provide the USAF with exceptional capability well beyond the legacy fleet, at a fraction of the cost of an exquisite solution. Perhaps in the end the only solution that meets the true requirements is indeed a more costly combat aircraft, but only after a fair competition should that decision be acted upon.

We respectfully request that the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) contain a provision which mandates an open and fair competition to replace this aged platform or in the least that the NDAA refrain from advocating for a sole-source award and furthermore that the committee deny any reprogramming requests from the Air Force that initiate a sole-source acquisition.

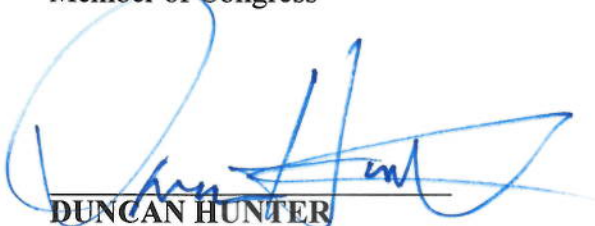
Sincerely,



BILL SHUSTER
Member of Congress



BRENDAN BOYLE
Member of Congress



DUNCAN HUNTER
Member of Congress



ROBERT BRADY
Member of Congress



RYAN COSTELLO
Member of Congress

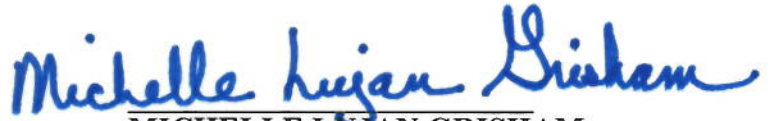


PATRICK MEEHAN
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DOUG LAMBORN

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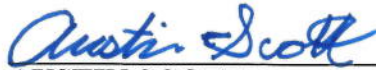
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