

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 7, 2010

The Honorable Michael B. Donley
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

The Honorable John McHugh
Secretary of the Army
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington DC 20301-1400

Dear Secretary McHugh and Secretary Donley:

We are concerned about air mobility force structure, particularly that of the Army. The President's budget request for fiscal year 2010 reduced the C-27 Joint Cargo Aircraft program from a total of 78 airframes to just 38. Further, the proposed budget shifted the program from being joint between the Army and Air Force to an Air Force-only program that ends in fiscal year 2012. The reduction in the total C-27 program presents challenges both for the future of Department of Defense air mobility as well as personnel in the Army who have been trained to fly the airplanes.

Regarding air mobility force structure, we would appreciate knowing your plans to integrate the reduced number of C-27 aircraft into the fleet. Will these replace the C-23 Sherpa as originally intended? Or will the C-27 and C-23 serve side-by-side? If the latter, what analysis led the Department to conclude that the C-23, once judged obsolete, is an airframe worthy of retaining in the force in lieu of purchasing new C-27s?

We firmly believe that the C-27 is an excellent option for austere tactical airlift into rugged environments. It is cheaper to fly than other intra-theater airlifters. The airframe seems ideal for the gamut of homeland defense and civil support missions that are central to the mission of the National Guard. We believe that future budgets should increase the C-27 buy.

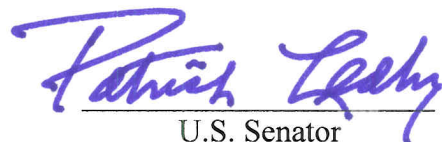
If the Department does decide to follow the plan to cut C-27 projected force structure as outlined in the fiscal year 2010 budget, we would like further clarification on the plans to retain highly skilled Army personnel who were trained to support the C-27 mission. In response to a report requirement included in House Committee Report 111-166 that accompanied H.R. 2647, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, the Department stated that "regarding aircrews for the C-27J, the Army and Air Force have not yet developed specific plan of action that will allow Army Aircrew personnel to transfer to the ANG to support C-27. However, the ANG welcomes Army personnel to apply for transition to ANG positions, and we do anticipate that ARNG will non-concur on any transfer action." When do you anticipate that the Army and the Air Force will be able to develop a specific plan for the transfer of Army aircrew personnel? Although you may not currently know all of the details, can you provide a general outline of that plan?

On behalf of the 97-member Senate National Guard Caucus, we thank you for your attention to this issue and for your service to our country.

Sincerely,



U.S. Senator
Christopher S. Bond



U.S. Senator
Patrick J. Leahy