

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 27, 2011

General Norton A. Schwartz
Chief of Staff
U.S. Department of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Room 4E924
Washington, DC 20330-1670

General Craig R. McKinley
Chief
National Guard Bureau
1636 Defense Pentagon
Room 1E169
Washington, DC 20301-1636

Dear General Schwartz and General McKinley:

We write to express our concern with the Air National Guard's current C-27J basing proposal. Under the current bed-down proposal, eight bases will bed-down four operational aircraft while one base will support four operational and two training aircraft.

We are deeply concerned that this proposal is unworkable and will limit our Air National Guard units' ability to train effectively and provide the homeland security capabilities that our states expect with the delivery of these aircraft. The operations tempo expected of these aircraft is high, with perhaps 16 of the 38 aircraft in the inventory estimated to be in theater at any given time. Despite this high level of need, the deployment strategy for these aircraft is not yet clear. We presume, however, that when needed overseas, at least two aircraft from each base will be forward deployed. With one aircraft expected in some level of maintenance at any given time, only one aircraft would be available for home station training and homeland security functions. This is unacceptable.

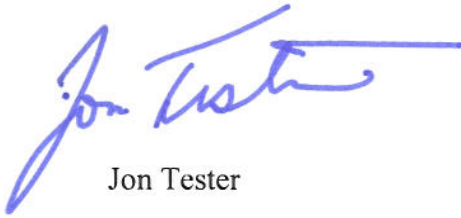
Recently the Adjutants General of the seven states programmed to receive the C-27 sent a letter to Congressional leadership on both the Senate and House Armed Services Committees. They expressed similar training and operational concerns, with special emphasis that the current C-27J force structure will weaken our national and homeland defense. They advocate increasing the buy from 38 to 42 aircraft, and in turn asking Congress to then direct 6 aircraft to each of the previously identified seven states. From their point of view, this would allow each C-27J unit to successfully fulfill its stateside role of homeland defense and disaster response, while maintaining their training requirements and desired war-time commitments. We support this recommendation for obvious reasons.

Another alternate within the constraints of the 38 programmed aircraft would be to increase the bed-down authorization at each installation by one aircraft, thus allowing for additional home-station training and homeland security needs. We recognize that this arrangement would leave one aircraft unassigned, but we are confident that you would develop a logical plan for that aircraft. This arrangement would not compromise operational capability – in fact we believe this approach would improve such capability – and could be accomplished with only minimal

disruption to the existing basing plan. Further, this arrangement would not prevent the identification of additional C-27J bases should the requirement for additional aircraft increase.

We appreciate your consideration of this important request and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Air Force's tactical airlift needs and those of our states' homeland security requirements can best be met as our units transition to the C-27J mission.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester



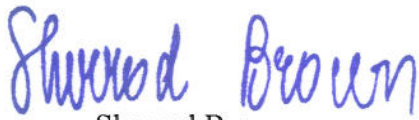
Joseph I. Lieberman



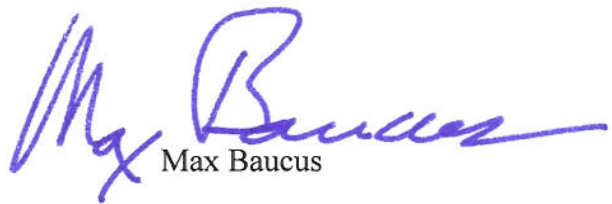
Richard Blumenthal



Barbara A. Mikulski



Sherrod Brown



Max Baucus



Kent Conrad



Benjamin L. Cardin