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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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ERIN C. CONATON, STAFF DIRECTOR

July 2, 2008

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Room 3E880
Washington, DC 20301-0001

Dear Secretary Gates:

We were recently briefed on a GAO assessment of NORTHCOM and NORAD combined operations at Peterson AFB and are concerned that this move may jeopardize the Nation's ability to respond to a wide range of threats. Fundamentally, NORAD was initially established to "prevent air attacks against North America, safeguard the sovereign airspaces of the United States and Canada by responding to unknown, unwanted, and unauthorized air activity approaching and operating within these airspaces, and provide aerospace and maritime warning for North America." In our estimation, the ability of NORAD to perform its primary mission is put at risk with its current placement at Peterson AFB.

When Admiral Keating briefed us on this initiative several years ago, the move to Peterson AFB was billed as a cost savings initiative that would enhance mission effectiveness. Time has proven that consolidating the operations centers for NORAD with NORTHCOM at Peterson AFB actually requires additional funding, and the operational synergy obtained in combining the NORTHCOM and NORAD missions may be offset with the loss of mission capabilities in other areas. Moreover, we are concerned that a comprehensive plan for mitigating security threats and vulnerabilities associated with the relocation has not been developed, implemented or adequately programmed.

Ironically, in the haste to combine command elements of NORTHCOM and NORAD, the Department of Defense elected to move operations even before a security assessment could be obtained. In a June 13, 2008, letter to this committee, 16 days after the combined command post became operational, this committee received notice that an additional \$9 million of security improvements would be required and that NORAD/NORTHCOM had elected to defer an additional \$14 million of identified security improvements. Most importantly, the identified security improvements did not, and perhaps still do not, reflect a comprehensive deterrence against a broad range of threats.

Secretary Gates
June 27, 2008
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The apparent lack of planning and consideration of the costs, benefits, and risks of this move compelled the committee to include a provision, Section 1062, in H.R. 5658, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, that would prevent further relocation of missions or functions from Cheyenne Mountain until proper analysis and certification is provided to the Congress. While we strongly believe that the combatant commander should retain the authority to organize his command for efficient and effective operations, the security concerns raised by our members and substantiated by the GAO necessitated legislative action.

We request that you thoroughly review the additional costs and the resultant vulnerabilities that have resulted from NORAD's move from Cheyenne Mountain to Peterson AFB. We strongly believe that our Nation should not have to rely on alternate command and control nodes as the sole risk mitigation tool when viable primary options are readily available and have been successfully employed for many years. We look forward to your examining this extremely important matter and hearing the results of your review.

Very truly yours,



IKE SKELTON
Chairman



DUNCAN HUNTER
Ranking Member

IS/DH:mcp