



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

APR 23 2012

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In February, I asked Air Force leadership to work with the Council of Governors on various options regarding Air National Guard force structure in light of feedback we received about our FY13-17 budget.

As you undoubtedly appreciate, my first responsibility is to ensure that we have a military force structure that is ready and capable to defend the nation. In light of the changing global security environment and fiscal realities, the Department undertook a comprehensive reassessment of our defense strategy, which President Obama announced in January 2012. Based on that strategy, the Air Force analyzed the proper mix of capabilities to ensure we can achieve our defense objectives on a day-to-day basis and surge air power in the event of a national crisis. This force structure also had to be cost-effective so that the Department could achieve savings of \$487 billion over 10 years as necessitated by the Budget Control Act.

After further review, the Air Force has determined that we can mitigate impacts to affected states with a \$400 million package that would maintain an additional 24 C-130 aircraft in the Air National Guard. We recognize the important role that these lift aircraft play in our support to civil authorities and to states – particularly in the event of natural disasters.

I strongly urge you to consider this proposal, which we believe sustains our national defense requirements and is responsive to concerns raised by the Council of Governors.

Recognizing the lead responsibilities of governors for the public safety of their citizens in disasters and emergencies, I will also be reaching out to the Council of Governors to establish a sustained process to exchange views, information, and advice on state civil support requirements. Given the notable success that the Council and the Department has achieved to strengthen unity of effort between the states and the DoD, I am confident that we can make similar progress to clarify and appropriately account for civil support requirements in the future. I would expect to have such a process in place before the President's FY14 budget is submitted early next year.

Sincerely,

cc:
The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Iowa Governor Terry Branstad
Washington Governor Christine Gregoire
Chief, NGB, General Craig R. McKinley