

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2007

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Skelton and Levin and Ranking Members Hunter and McCain:

As you begin negotiations for conference on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (H.R. 1585), we write to express our strong support for fully authorizing the President's Budget request for the Joint Cargo Aircraft (JCA) and to maintain an Army-led Joint Program Office in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement. In particular, we write to express our concerns that Section 132 of the House bill and Section 1030 of the Senate bill would delay fielding of this critical program.

Providing robust intra-theater lift capabilities over the "last tactical mile" of combat operations plays a critical role in supporting the modern warfighter. However, the current inventory of inter-theater transports is increasingly inadequate for this mission due to increased use in current combat operations, which not only stresses older aircraft such as the C-23 Sherpa but also rapidly ages newer rotorcraft aircraft as well. The Army C-23 in particular is an aging aircraft which is not pressurized, not certified for medical evacuation missions and incompatible with the standard cargo pallets. This important intra-theater lift mission cannot continue to be supported by a rapidly aging, overstretched and inadequate fixed wing fleet.

Once fielded, JCA will provide the rapid, reliable and flexible intra-theater lift capabilities on an asymmetric battlefield. The JCA will ease the strain on our present fleet and afford the immediate need for greater maximum loads at smaller, unrefined landing strips. This will get critical equipment and supplies into the fight faster in support of the warfighter.

The need for improved intra-theater lift has repeatedly been studied and validated by the Department of Defense (DoD) through the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC). The Army and Air Force, in coordination with the National Guard Bureau, meet the joint validated requirement through the capabilities provided by the JCA. Additionally, the recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) ruling against the JCA bid protest is a testament to the program's joint acquisition management. The joint requirements call for fielding a total of 78 aircraft to the Army, Air Force, National

Guard and Army Reserves. Also, in June 2006, the Army and Air Force Vice Chiefs of Staff signed a Memorandum of Agreement that clearly laid out the joint requirements for the program that meet both Army and Air Force operational capabilities.

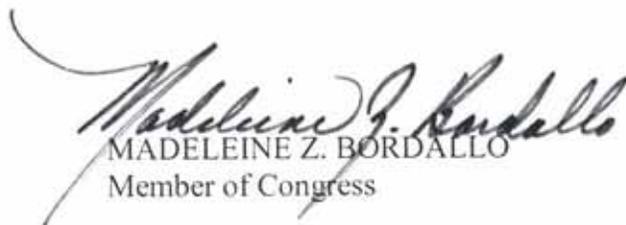
As importantly, current planning would assign the JCA to Army and Air National Guard units in 19 states and the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico. JCA will provide an added critical capability to state emergency management and homeland security missions. In addition, JCA will help National Guard units across the country replace missions lost to BRAC 2005, retain personnel with needed skills and recruit new members. This is the right mission at the right time for the National Guard, and one that is strongly supported by Governors and Adjutants General across the country.

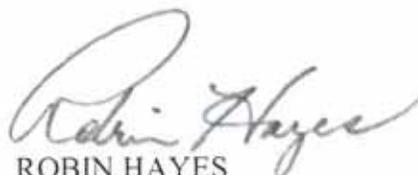
Legislative language in the Senate and House versions of the Defense Authorization Bill, as currently written, would delay the fielding of JCA aircraft. In particular, the Senate, in Section 1030, has included language that would shift responsibility of the Joint Cargo Aircraft program from the Army to the Air Force divesting the Army of any fixed-wing aircraft missions. Such a directive would undermine Army fixed-wing capabilities essential to supporting critical combat missions and protecting the homeland. The Army-led program is on schedule and has met all of its milestones. Shifting responsibility to the Air Force at this point would set the program back at least two to three years – if not more – due to differing fielding timelines between the services.

The Army, Air Force and the National Guard have worked together to provide a workable Joint solution to an important Joint capability gap. Given the critical need for improved intra-theater lift capabilities, we believe that it is critical that the JCA program continue to move forward without delay. To this end, we respectfully request your support in conference for fully authorizing the Joint Cargo Aircraft program in fiscal year 2008 as submitted to Congress in the President's Budget, and removing any legislative provisions or requirements that could impede the program's progress.

Thank you for your consideration and strong support for the men and women of our armed forces. We, collectively and individually, do not have a financial interest in this request, nor do any of our spouses.

Sincerely,


MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Member of Congress


ROBIN HAYES
Member of Congress


JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress


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Member of Congress

Darlene Hooley

Honore Cobb

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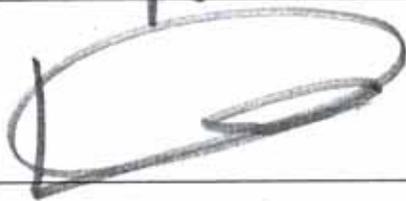
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