

December 10, 2020

Lieutenant General Sami D. Said
Office of the Air Force Inspector General
1140 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1140

Dear Lieutenant General Said:

We write to request that your office immediately conduct a formal investigation into the Air Force's selection of four Air National Guard bases to receive 24 C-130J cargo planes in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, and whether this selection process was influenced by political motives. Such an inquiry is essential to prevent yet another attempt to politicize our military and protect against any irregular processes or subjective decision-making. Adherence to established basing criteria – such as mission capacity, mission capability, and cost, among other factors – ensures that basing decisions meet national defense needs in a cost-effective manner. We encourage you to comprehensively review the original selection criteria for the basing decision, determine whether this criteria was subject to any undue political influence, and evaluate the prioritization of these criteria in determining the final basing decisions.

As you are aware, the Air Force considered eight Air National Guard installations during this process, and ultimately selected the Louisville Air National Guard Base in Kentucky, the McLaughlin Air National Guard Base in West Virginia, and the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve base in Texas to each receive eight C-130J aircraft in 2021. The Savannah Air National Guard base is slated to receive any additional C-130J aircraft funded in FY 2021.

Our concern regarding possible political interference in these basing decisions is based on multiple factors. The timing of this announcement is highly suspect given that there is an ongoing presidential transition process as well as a Senate runoff election in Georgia in early January. Congress has also not yet appropriated funding necessary to support C-130J aircraft at the four Air National Guard bases selected, notwithstanding the fact that the Air Force notified Congress in March that it would select only three bases to receive the new aircraft – all of which raises further alarm about the timing of this announcement and its possible impact on the outcome of the Georgia Senate races.

Additionally, questions remain regarding the extent to which mission capacity, mission capability, and cost were considered in the final decision, and how scores were tabulated across bases to reach such decision. Basing selection precedent indicates that these are standard factors in a site survey team assessment, including given the additional costs required if current bases do not have the capacity for the updated, larger aircraft. The deviation from established precedent undermines for example the significant investments Congress has already made in many Air National Guard facilities to make them C-130J compatible. These efforts are reflected in the site

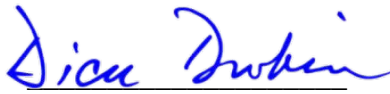
survey costs, as briefed to Congress, identifying multiple locations as the more cost effective and mission ready options in the Air National Guard. As such, we urge you to examine the extent to which the Air Force considered mission capacity, mission capability, and cost in this basing decision, and whether the decision deviated from prior basing decisions in terms of the factors considered. We also request that you share with us data that indicates what the Air Force's scoring looked like for individual bases in each step of the process.

Given the ongoing political circumstances, we believe that a closer examination of the Air Force C-130J basing decision is warranted. We welcome your conclusions and evaluation of this basing decision, and thank you very much for your immediate attention to this urgently needed investigation.

Sincerely,


RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator


CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senator


RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator


TAMMY DUCKWORTH
United States Senator


JON TESTER
United States Senator