

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 2, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel  
Secretary of Defense  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary,

In light of the recommendations of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), we ask you to reconsider the more than \$1.11 billion in sole-source contracts over the last three years for Russian-made Mi-17 helicopters, spare parts, and maintenance services awarded to Rosoboronexport. While we share the goal of providing the Afghan military with sustainable anti-narcotics and counterterrorism operations, the SIGAR has rightfully acknowledged that this program simply does not achieve this goal. Rather, it saddles the Afghan military with a fleet of helicopters they can neither operate nor afford to maintain and provides U.S. tax dollars to a Russian state-controlled arms export firm that is complicit in Assad's murder of innocent Syrians.

The inadvisable purchase of these Mi-17 helicopters is facilitated through an entity under the control of the Russian government, which as you are aware has demonstrated time and again that its interests are diametrically opposed to our national security. It is unconscionable to provide Russia with the recently announced \$550 million contract for 30 additional Mi-17 helicopters while Prime Minister Putin acknowledges sheltering the fugitive Edward Snowden at the Sheremetyevo airport.

The Russian state-controlled arms export firm Rosoboronexport continues to provide the Syrian government with the means to perpetrate widespread and systemic attacks on its own people. Rosoboronexport has committed to provide Syria with S-300 advanced anti-aircraft missiles that would protect the air dominance of the Assad regime and facilitate its continued attacks on the civilian population. Even in the face of crimes against humanity and the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government during the past year, enabled by the regular flow of weapons from Russia, the United States Government has unfortunately continued to procure from Rosoboronexport.

Section 1233 of S.1197, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, prohibits the use of funds to enter contracts with Rosoboronexport. As we work together to enact this provision into law, we call to your attention that the fact that you currently have the authority to end this contract with Rosoboronexport. Not only does it fail to meet the requirements of the Afghan military, but it also provides U.S. taxpayers' dollars to the Russian government as it shelters a fugitive from justice and undermines U.S. policy on Syria.

More than a year has passed since we wrote to your predecessor expressing our concern regarding the Department of Defense's dealings with Rosoboronexport. This is a serious policy

problem, and we ask for your personal attention to help solve it. Thank you for your service to our nation and your dedication to the members of our Armed Forces.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senate



KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND  
United States Senate



JOHN CORNYN  
United States Senate



KELLY AYOTTE  
United States Senate



ROGER F. WICKER  
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