

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 6, 2016

Congressional Conferees
The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017
United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Conferees:

We write regarding the conference committee for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (NDAA). As passed by the Senate, this legislation contains provisions that strengthen defense policy and fortify our national security. As conference negotiations begin with your House counterparts, we urge you to ensure that robust funding for Black Hawks is supported in the final version of the NDAA in order to address urgent Army readiness concerns, while providing substantial savings by procuring at more efficient rates.

Black Hawks continue to be the backbone of Army Aviation, and its modernization strategy is incredibly important to all components, given the wear and tear on the fleet resulting from more than 14 years of sustained combat operations and high OPTEMPO. The proposed FY 2017 budget included a decrease in Black Hawk production down to a total of 36 helicopters. This is a reduction of 24 helicopters from what was planned in the FY 2016 budget. The FY 2017 request for just 36 helicopters could only have been a response to budget pressure and not of need, as the Army provided an unfunded request list that included 36 additional Black Hawks.

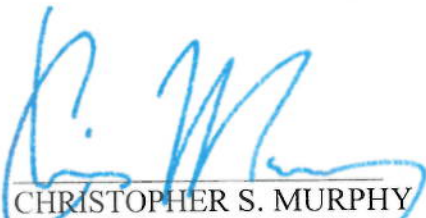
While the Senate was able to fund the President's budget request of 36 helicopters, the House surpassed this to fund 72 Black Hawks, satisfying the Army's unfunded requests. While we do not support shortchanging the OCO account to fund these helicopters, we urge you to work with your House counterparts to find a satisfactory solution which funds these critical aircraft at the highest level possible.


By supporting strong funding for Black Hawks during conference, we will meet pressing Army readiness concerns and take advantage of unit cost savings that benefit the Army and the taxpayers. We thank you for your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate


THOM TILLIS
United States Senate

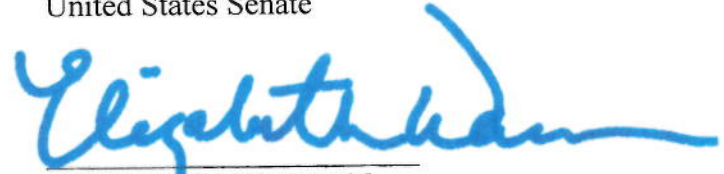

CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate


CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senate


CHARLES E. SCHUMER
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EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate


ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senate


ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senate

cc: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
cc: Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid