

April 2, 2012

Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate  
Washington D.C. 20510

Honorable John McCain  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate  
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Levin and Ranking Member McCain:

I write in support of your letter to Secretary Leon Panetta requesting the Department of Defense (DOD) not take irreversible action to implement proposed force structure decisions until the Fiscal Year 2013 defense budget request has been authorized and appropriated by Congress. I also write to seek your consideration for prohibiting any funds authorized in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 from being obligated or expended for force structure decisions made by the Air Force until adequate information is provided to and approved by Congress as well as reviewed by the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

As evidenced in last week's Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the Department of the Air Force's Fiscal Year 2013 budget request and future years defense program, detailed assessments were not conducted prior to the force structure decisions. Information provided to Congress by the Air Force regarding its proposed changes has been inconsistent and insufficient, lacking the details and assessments required to conduct adequate oversight and make informed decisions.

For example, the Air Force is proposing to relocate the 18<sup>th</sup> Aggressor Squadron from Eielson Air Force Base to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska to save money in base support services in Fiscal Year 2015. However, the Air Force has not conducted a detailed feasibility assessment or cost analysis of the relocation to justify the decision and estimated cost-savings. In fact, a site-team is not scheduled to conduct a feasibility study, cost analysis and risk assessment until mid-April. Given the Senate Armed Services Committee mark-up of the National Defense Authorization Act is scheduled for mid-May, I am concerned the committee will not have adequate time to review the site assessment team findings.

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I am also concerned with the sufficiency and validity of the information Congress may receive on this issue, and other force structure decisions. As you may recall, the Air Force proposed the relocation of the 18<sup>th</sup> Aggressor Squadron from Eielson AFB and decrease in base support services during Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005. The review by the independent BRAC Commission found the Air Force over-estimated cost savings by \$1 billion and underestimated the military value of Eielson Air Force Base. Cost savings presented by the Air Force for other structure changes have been full of discrepancies and disputed by other organizations in the DOD. Most notably, the DOD's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation Office concluded sustainment and operations costs for the C-27J were significantly less than presented by the Air Force. Therefore, I would recommend the force structure proposals and any information provided to Congress be reviewed by the GAO for sufficiency and accuracy.

In addition, the Air Force's proposal to relocate the 18<sup>th</sup> Aggressor Squadron from Eielson Air Force Base and other proposed realignments for fiscal year 2013, may not comply with existing base realignment and closure law. As you know Title 10, United States Code, Section 2867 mandates a notice, hold and wait period before DOD may execute certain realignments. To date, the Air Force has provided no details or assessment of the proposed realignment's impact to civilian personnel through the future years defense program. It is imperative Congress has the information to determine if the Air Force is in compliance with existing statute.

The relocation of the 18<sup>th</sup> Aggressor Squadron is one example of the force structure changes proposed the Air Force which has yet to be assessed or validated, and is based on incorrect assumptions. While I am mindful of budget constraints, the force structure changes proposed by the Air Force warrant serious scrutiny by Congress to ensure they are in the best interest of national security and the best use of taxpayer dollars.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. Please contact Lindsay Kavanaugh on my staff at 224-3004 for more information.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich  
United States Senator