

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017

The Honorable Dr. Heather A. Wilson  
Secretary of the Air Force  
Office of the Secretary of the Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20330

Dear Secretary Wilson,

We write to express our strong support for the New Mexico Air National Guard to receive Legacy HH-60G aircraft that the Air Force is planning to divest, as it fields the Combat Rescue Helicopter (CRH). The 58<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing (SOW) at Kirtland Air Force Base is currently scheduled to receive the first CRH in Fiscal Year 2020 and is expected to deliver the legacy HH-60Gs to the 309<sup>th</sup> Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG) at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ.

The 58<sup>th</sup> SOW has presented two challenges to our offices regarding the transition to the CRH - manpower and hangar and training space. We are fully confident that the New Mexico Air National Guard can provide quality, timely, and cost-effective solutions with its available personnel and infrastructure.

- **Manpower.** The 58<sup>th</sup> SOW anticipates a shortage of manpower as initial instructors are transitioned to the CRH while their mission requirements remain to produce aircrew in the legacy HH-60G PAVE Hawk. They have indicated it will require attention and a coordinated effort across the Air Force and they will work with the Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Air Combat Command to ensure there is adequate manpower in place not only to train in legacy systems but also to spin up the CRH.
- **Hangar and Training Space.** The squadron tasked with providing graduate level helicopter training will be heavily tasked as they may train in up to four different helicopters (CRH, legacy training for the HH-60G, UH-1N training and potentially its replacement, the UH-X program). The 58<sup>th</sup> SOW has also identified the hangar and associated building where the CRH training will take place is not of adequate size to accomplish this future growth and will not be adequate to support the new requirements. Furthermore, office and classroom space on the flight line where the new aircrew members will be trained is undersized and will need renovations and additions to ensure a successful and seamless transition for the 58<sup>th</sup> SOW.

Transferring HH-60Gs to the 150<sup>th</sup> SOW will satisfy one of Air National Guard's Capstone Principles of ensuring each state's Air National Guard have a unit equipped wing and flying

squadron. It will also guarantee there is not a disruption in pilot production, which is critical given the Air Force's pilot shortage while also alleviating the stress on the 58<sup>th</sup> SOW to train in both the legacy and new helicopter airframes. The President's FY18 Basing Plan indicates the CRH conversion will take approximately 10 years with the Air National Guard being the last to receive the CRH. As you look at the feasibility of this transfer, you will find the 150<sup>th</sup> SOW has the infrastructure to support the HH-60G and, with a minimal increase in authorized personnel, can support training and maintenance of the airframe.

As you know, the New Mexico Air National Guard has a long legacy of service to our nation, and you have previously agreed during testimony before the U.S. Senate that you would also like to see the Tacos in a flying mission again. Transferring the HH-60G mission to the NMANG will serve a force multiplier and continue the important mission of training combat rescue airman. We strongly urge you to consider assigning the HH-60G mission to the NMANG.

Thank you for your consideration and service.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Steve Pearce  
United States Representative



Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Representative



Michelle Lujan Grisham  
United States Representative

Cc:

General David L. Goldfein  
General Joseph L. Lengyel  
Lieutenant General L. Scott Rice