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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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PAUL ARCANGELI, STAFF DIRECTOR

January 24, 2011

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Thank you for your recent briefing to the congressional defense committees on the results of your "efficiencies" initiative and for the follow up visit by your staff that yielded some more detail on the proposed decisions.

The House Armed Services Committee appreciates the need for efficiencies across the Department of Defense and believes Pentagon programs must receive greater scrutiny to ensure every defense dollar is spent effectively. However, we have serious reservations regarding some of the specific recommendations and the analysis that led to them. This committee intends to conduct a thorough assessment of your proposals in formal hearings and other discussions with your staff, the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps as part of the Fiscal Year 2012 budget review process. As you know, the first hearing is set for January 26, 2011.

Our immediate concern is that the Defense Department will take precipitous action in the near term that would undercut Congress' ability to pass judgment on the recommendations. For example, the Marine Corps has stated in press reports that it may issue a stop work order on the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) contract within the next few weeks.

If true, this action would cease the program before the House Armed Services Committee and other congressional defense committees have had the opportunity to review the analysis and other documentation that led to the recommendation to terminate the EFV and whether it is in fact an "efficiency," and/or is in the best interest of our national security. As a further example, it is unclear to this committee what analysis led to the proposal to complete development of SLAMRAAM program and then terminate, while immediately terminating the EFV program without completing development. These questions require diligent consideration prior to the Department taking action that would adversely impact the programs in the coming weeks.

We specifically request that no "stop work" orders be issued until our committee has the opportunity to fully examine all of the efficiencies you have proposed. By doing so, you help ensure that the Congress can fulfill its Constitutional obligations as part of the Fiscal Year 2012 budget cycle.

Thank you Mr. Secretary.

With kind regards, we are



HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON
Chairman



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Chairman
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Air and Land Forces



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HPM:jdw