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An Independent Nonprofit Aerospace Organization

April 4, 2008

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

As you know, the Air Force Association is an independent, non-profit association with 125,000 members and 220 chapters in 49 states. The National Officers and Board of Directors of the Air Force Association strongly believe that preserving the option of acquiring additional C-17 Globemasters in the future is necessary to ensure a dependable strategic airlift capability for this century. We urge that the C-17 production line be kept open. Keeping the line open will provide our nation's future leaders with the full range of options to strengthen and maintain this element of U.S. airpower. Whether peacetime or wartime, one certainty is that global strategic lift is a high-demand, low-density asset.

The Air Force Association is concerned that the Department of Defense has made a premature decision to close the C-17 production line ... this at a time when the country is increasingly dependent on its ability to get supplies and personnel to some out-of-the-way places to support the needs of our great warriors. However, recently announced and ongoing actions by the Department seem to justify an increased number of C-17s for our nation. These include:

- An increasingly high opstempo for our ground forces – requiring constant movement to and from CENTCOM's AOR
- The creation of AFRICOM – requiring increased emphasis and presence on the continent
- An increase in the size of the Army and Marine Corps by 65,000 and 27,000 respectively – requiring more lift to get them to battle
- Reduction in troops in Europe and the Far East, returning them to the CONUS – requiring more lift to move them to hot spots
- An increasingly long presence in both Iraq and Afghanistan – requiring lift to move rotations in and out of theater ... for the foreseeable future

- Humanitarian airlift to respond to natural disasters anywhere in the world
- The increased use of airlift to get convoys off the roads in Iraq – diverting C-17s from their strategic mission
- The fielding of the Army’s Future Combat System – which will not fit into a C-130 and which will require the use of the C-17 for intra-theater missions
- An uncertainty on where the United States might next be deployed in the Global War on Terrorism – increasing the risk to our people when we have lift that cannot meet the needs of force

This strategic and global airlift capability is absolutely crucial to the worldwide interests of the United States, and is a vital component of every military undertaking. We believe it is crucial that our nation’s military planners and policymakers have the full range of airlift assets to meet future demands.

Mr. Secretary, we request your consideration of the potential future needs for strategic airlift and urge you to help keep the C-17 line open.

Very respectfully,



Robert E. Largent
Chairman of the Board, AFA



Michael M. Dunn
President/CEO, AFA

CC:

The Honorable Ike Skelton, Chairman
Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable Duncan L. Hunter
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable Carl Levin, Chairman
Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services

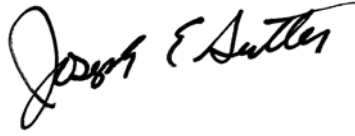
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House Appropriations Subcommittee on
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The Honorable C.W. Bill Young
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House Appropriations Subcommittee on
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The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman
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The Honorable Ted Stevens
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Defense

The Honorable Michael W. Wynne
Secretary of the Air Force



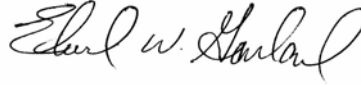
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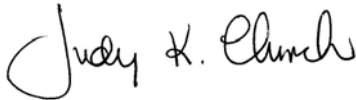
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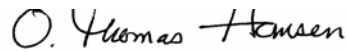
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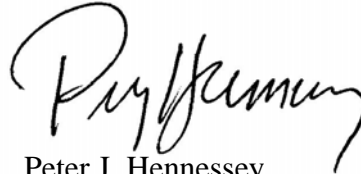
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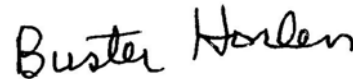
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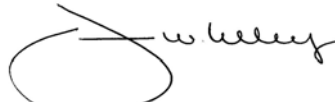
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