

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 10, 2014

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Vice Chairman Cochran,

Recently the Navy's first MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft landed at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, in Maryland. The aircraft's journey began eleven hours earlier and 3,290 nautical miles away in Palmdale, California. This historic flight marks the transition from initial flight testing to demonstrating Triton's ability to perform operational missions, a major step toward delivering this revolutionary capability to the fleet in 2018.

Triton will provide unique advanced capabilities to the fleet in support of maritime surveillance requirements and will support the scheduled retirement of aging legacy maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft. Once deployed, Triton will provide significantly increased capacity and capability to the fleet while reducing the total ownership cost of the Navy's maritime domain awareness mission. Triton, which was designed for persistent maritime intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), can fly for 24 hours at over 10 miles high, allowing for coverage of one million square nautical miles of ocean in a single mission. Triton will team with existing manned aircraft to provide an unprecedented picture of the maritime environment to Navy commanders.

In response to unexpected challenges during the Triton development program, in 2013 the Navy prudently delayed production to minimize the potential for concurrent development costs. Triton development has progressed considerably and is now performing within all current cost and schedule parameters, on track to meet all program milestones.

It is important the Navy has sufficient resources to begin procuring long-lead items in advance of low rate initial production in 2016 and in support of initial operational capability requirements in 2018. As the committee considers conference negotiations for the FY15 Defense Appropriations Act, we support receding to the House position and providing full production funding for four MQ-4C Triton systems, as requested by the Navy.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and your commitment to providing the resources necessary to preserve our national security posture amidst the challenging and dynamic global environment.

Sincerely,


JULIA BROWNLEY

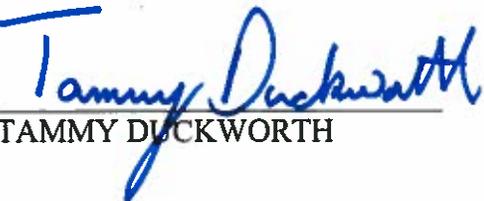

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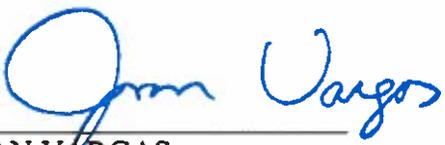

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