

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 27, 2020

The Honorable Mark Esper  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Esper:

We write to express our dismay about the recent notification of the transfer of \$3.8 billion in funds appropriated by Congress, to include \$1.3 billion appropriated for National Guard and Reserve Equipment and \$169 million appropriated for Air Guard C-130Js, for the wall on our southern border. This short-sighted reprogramming targets the men and women of the National Guard across the country, including those in the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois.

Over the years, Congress has supported strong funding for National Guard and Reserve Equipment, an account that has largely been underfunded by the Department. However, funding for National Guard and Reserve Equipment has been critical to addressing equipment shortfalls, and meeting needs related to readiness, sustainment, and modernization. This essential equipment – which includes everything from Humvee ambulances and radars to protective gear and training simulators – is also important to maintaining compatibility across the components, and raiding this vital account puts at risk our men and women who put their lives on the line in missions around the world and closer to home.

Further troubling is the reprogramming of funds appropriated for Air Guard C-130J aircraft. As you are aware, the currently C-130H fleet is aging out and becoming increasingly expensive to fly. Efforts to recapitalize the older C-130 fleet, which are now flown exclusively by the Air Guard, are necessary to ensuring capacity and capability for tactical airlift operations across a broad range of missions.

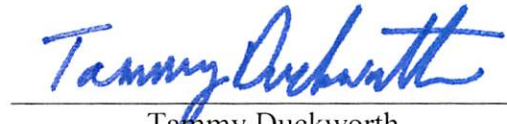
We are particularly concerned about the impact of the reprogramming of funds appropriate for Air Guard C-130J aircraft on Illinois. In Peoria, the 182nd Airlift Wing's current C-130H mission performs the tactical portion of various airlift missions and has a strong history of outstanding performance, including the highest C-130H mission capability rate in the Air National Guard from 2009-2017. The 182nd has also achieved the most fully mission capable C-130 hours since June 2013 while flying the most hours since October 2012 for the deployed location. The 182nd has flown the C-130H since 2005, and is a strong base candidate under the latest Air National Guard C-130J Recapitalization as well as for any future recapitalization efforts. Reprogramming funds appropriated for Air Guard C-130J aircraft undermines the excellent work at Wings across the country such as in Peoria and prevents the National Guard from modernizing necessary capabilities.

The decision to take money away from important modernization efforts is shortsighted and political, and does not support the national defense strategy. It also seriously further eroded the Department's relationship with Congress. We hope that the Department will reconsider this foolish decision, and refocus its mission on national security.

We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

  
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

  
Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

  
Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress