

CT DELEGATION QUESTIONS ARMY'S

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 25, 2004

CT DELEGATION QUESTIONS ARMY'S DECISION TO END COMANCHE PROGRAM

Members concerned by the decision's impact on national security, taxpayers, and workers

WASHINGTON - Connecticut's Congressional Delegation today questioned the Bush Administration's decision to terminate the crucial Comanche Helicopter program and warned of the impact this decision will have on America's national defense capability, taxpayers, and the workers building the aircraft.

In a letter to Acting Army Secretary Les Brownlee, Senators Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman, and Representatives Nancy Johnson, Christopher Shays, Rosa DeLauro, John Larson, and Rob Simmons said they were deeply concerned that the Army has chosen to kill a critical centerpiece of the nation's national security capability. Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Representative Bob Brady (D-PA) also signed the letter.

"We continue to support the RAH-66 Comanche because of our concern that the costs of terminating this program are both strategically and financially unacceptable," the letter says. "We are also concerned that the nation will lose critical military capability and delay Army's transformation with the loss of Comanche. We contend that canceling the RAH-66, especially at this stage of its program development, is a decision that will have negative impacts on the Army's future force structure, the nation's taxpayers and the workers of our states."

The full text of the letter is below.

February 25, 2004

The Honorable Les Brownlee
Secretary of the Army, Acting
102 Army Pentagon, Room 3E488
Washington, DC 20310-0102

Dear Secretary Brownlee:

We write deeply concerned by your announcement canceling a weapon system that the Army has said is vital to the future of the service's aviation program, the RAH-66 Comanche helicopter. The Army has long argued that Comanche is a critical program integral to the military's transformation into a 21st century fighting force and Congress has consistently supported those arguments. To our knowledge, Comanche is the only truly transformational aviation program currently being pursued by the Army and we have serious questions whether you have a plan to account for the capabilities lost without the RAH-66. Given the significant and irrecoverable investment into Comanche and the detrimental impact its cancellation would have on the Army's future power projection, we wish to express our great concern about this announcement.

According to the Defense Department's own testimony, the Comanche remains a key enabler for the Army's planned force transformation. It is considered to be an integral part of a system of systems, designed to leverage air, ground, manned and unmanned teaming to a level not possible with any current platform. The program is critical to the Army's conversion from the current platform centric division structure to the modular system of systems Unit of Action (UA) construct. Senior defense officials have stated that: "without Comanche, the Future Combat System and the UA must undergo a complete redesign and analysis." With Comanche such a significant contributor to a successful Army transformation, we cannot understand how the program can be cancelled at this stage in its development without significantly impacting our future security.

In his statement announcing the termination of the Comanche helicopter, General Schoomaker stated that the savings

from this program would be used to upgrade existing aviation systems and purchase up to 800 new helicopters. Although we have applauded the general's efforts in transforming the Army's force structure, in the past, we do not see his decision to "modernize" an aging aviation fleet instead of completing an innovative next-generation weapon system as transformational. The Army must do both. Halting Comanche and the transformation it represents is not a plan of action that we believe will ultimately maximize our future military strength, nor is this a decision that leverages the enormous financial and technological investment already expended on the RAH-66.

We in Congress have worked diligently for years to assist the Department of Defense in restructuring and properly funding the Comanche. To date, the American taxpayer has invested \$7.938 billion in the Comanche program. Earlier this month, the President submitted his proposed budget for fiscal year 2005 to Congress with \$1.23 billion in research and development and \$12.1 million in production included for the Comanche program. Congress has fully funded this program for the past two fiscal years, and by doing so clearly expressed its strong support for the Comanche.

We continue to support the RAH-66 Comanche because of our concern that the costs of terminating this program are both strategically and financially unacceptable. We are also concerned that the nation will lose critical military capability and delay Army's transformation with the loss of Comanche. We contend that canceling the RAH-66, especially at this stage of its program development, is a decision that will have negative impacts on the Army's future force structure, the nation's taxpayers and the workers of our states.

We would appreciate a full explanation of how the Army intends to accomplish the reconnaissance and attack multi-mission platform without the Comanche, as well as an accounting of the full costs associated with the cancellation of the program.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
United States Senator

JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN
United States Senator

ARLEN SPECTER
United States Senator

NANCY JOHNSON
Member of Congress

CHRISTOPHER SHAYS
Member of Congress

ROSA DELAURO
Member of Congress

JOHN LARSON
Member of Congress

ROB SIMMONS
Member of Congress

BOB BRADY
Member of Congress

cc: General Pete Schoomaker, Chief of Staff of the Army
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