

CT Delegation Calls on Air Force to Re-Open CSAR-X Bid Process

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 8, 2007

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Washington, DC – The Connecticut delegation called on Secretary of the Air Force Michael W. Wynne to reopen the selection process for the Air Force's contract for the Combat Search and Rescue Replacement Vehicle (CSAR-X) to ensure the process is handled in a fair and thorough manner. Despite a Government Accountability Office (GAO) review, which late yesterday released new details about the problems with the procurement process, the Secretary has stated that he would like to stay with what we got and get this product going as soon as possible.

In a letter to the Air Force Secretary, the delegation wrote, "It is the responsibility of the Congress to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately – we expect the Air Force to take all steps necessary to address any and all problems that were identified. Regardless of the Air Force's ultimate selection, we believe that now is the time to take action to ensure that the selection process is conducted in a fair, thorough and reasoned manner."

The GAO found that the Air Force's evaluation of the bids was inconsistent with what had been laid out in the solicitation. They further recommended that the Air Force amend its solicitation and request revised proposals.

"The GAO made the correct decision today. American military personnel depend on our pararescue squads to save their lives when they are in harm's way. These units need and deserve the best possible equipment," said Dodd. "The helicopter designed and manufactured by Sikorsky's Connecticut workforce fits that bill. I applaud the company's decision to aggressively challenge the Air Force's flawed decision, and believe that Sikorsky's aircraft should win this contract on its merits, in an open and fair competition."

"Last month, the GAO upheld Sikorsky's position that the Sikorsky helicopter did not get a full and complete evaluation against the required criteria. I urge the Air force to follow the GAO recommendations to ensure the nation get the best possible helicopter for this job," said Lieberman.

"GAO has already stated that this contract was unfairly awarded. The new details have only shed even more light on the procurement process. It is now time for the Air Force to fully comply with those findings," stated Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro (Conn-3). "Sikorsky's workers deserve the chance to compete on a level playing field for the right to build the next combat search-and-rescue helicopter for the Air Force, and I believe that they will win this contract when

it is re-bid.

Congressman Christopher Shays (Conn-4): The Air Force selection process needs to be fair. With the GAO clearly calling this process into question, it seems to me the Air Force should be more focused on correcting the process than on completing an improper one.

I am very happy that the GAO is pushing for the Air Force to allow a rebid of the rescue helicopter program. This matter clearly highlights the need for oversight in how these contracts are awarded. We are entrusted to spend the taxpayer's money wisely and ensure an open and fair contract bidding process. As a world leader in the manufacturing of advanced helicopters, the Sikorsky aircraft program deserves the legitimate review and consideration of the Air Force, said Congressman John Larson (Conn-1).

Congressman Chris Murphy (Conn-5): In Connecticut, I hear from my constituents that they are frustrated with the way Washington works. This particular contracting process is of concern because I want to ensure that taxpayer's dollars are being spent appropriately. I look forward to a response from the Secretary.

Below is the text of the letter:

March 7, 2007

The Honorable Michael W. Wynne, Secretary

1160 Air Force Pentagon

Washington DC, 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Wynne:

We are writing to express our concern regarding remarks attributed to you that disregard the Government Accountability Office's recent determination that the evaluation that resulted in the Air Force's awarding the CSAR-X contract to The Boeing Company was deeply flawed.

The GAO's premise, of course, is that a proper evaluation might change the outcome and that corrective action would be taken. Thus, we were surprised and concerned to read, following your recent Congressional testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, that you would like to stay with what we got and get this product going as soon as possible and that the Air Force is considering whether it can take corrective action more narrowly than what GAO has recommended.

We would expect the Air Force's primary concern would be to ensure a fair and unbiased procurement process, but your comments as reported could be construed to suggest a predisposition regarding the need to take corrective action. We hope this was not your intent, and would appreciate a clarification of your views to preclude any misunderstanding.

It is the responsibility of the Congress to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately. As such, we expect the Air Force to take all steps necessary to address any and all problems that were identified by the GAO regarding CSAR-X procurement. Regardless of the Air Force's ultimate selection, we believe that now is the time to take action to ensure that the selection process is conducted in a fair, thorough and reasoned manner.

We appreciate your personal attention to these concerns, and will continue to monitor this procurement closely. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Dodd

Joseph Lieberman

Rosa L. DeLauro

Christopher Shays

John B. Larson

Christopher S. Murphy

Joe Courtney

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