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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

September 17, 2013

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ROBERT L. SIMMONS, II, STAFF DIRECTOR

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
2000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Mabus:

We are writing to express our appreciation for your strong support for future unmanned aircraft capabilities that will one day be an integral part of the Carrier Air Wing (CVW). We have followed the technology development of this concept with great interest as it has matured over the last decade responding to the need to increase the range, persistence, and lethality of the CVW, especially in anti-access/area-denial environments. Specifically, we share your view that platforms like the Unmanned Carrier-Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike system (UCLASS) "will radically change the way presence and combat power is delivered from aircraft carriers."

However, we request that you remain vigilant and monitor the path of this program closely because we believe the current path could limit the capability growth of the system in the future. We believe UCLASS should be designed to be an integral part of the CVW that can employ in the full-spectrum of the Navy's power-projection mission. For this reason, we encourage you to draft a technology development request for proposal (RFP) that does not focus on just one particular key performance parameter, but enables competition and capability tradeoffs on a spectrum of attributes such as range, payload, survivability and affordability. This approach will allow industry to offer a variety of options for UCLASS that meet threshold requirements for the smaller and lesser contingencies, but will also preserve the ability for industry to offer an affordable capability growth path to meet objective requirements that are more favored in high-end, complex contingency operations. In short, we believe it is too early in the development process to limit the potential of this capability and we encourage you to closely monitor its progress. We would also request that after you have approved the final draft version of the technology development RFP, and before it goes to the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics for review, that you provide the committee a briefing on the construction, content, and evaluation criteria contained within the RFP.

We also encourage you to closely examine the unconventional acquisition strategy proposed for the UCLASS program. While we strongly support fielding this capability to the Navy, we have concerns about the Navy's proposal to field up to four CVWs of capability for operational employment before

The Honorable Ray Mabus

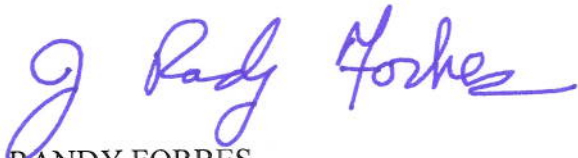
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achieving normal milestone B approval or conducting full-system operational testing and evaluation. Specifically, we have significant concerns about the technology development strategy to acquire a large number of air vehicles using research and development funding, which we feel does not follow the letter or spirit of recent acquisition reform efforts mandated by Congress.

While we know there will be further bureaucratic and budgetary hurdles to overcome as we work to advance this important capability, we are committed to working with you to ensure we procure a capability that will be integral to the CVW while remaining relevant and capable well into the future years. Thank you for your service and we look forward to our continued dialogue on this important topic.

Sincerely,



J. RANDY FORBES

Chairman

Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces



MIKE MCINTYRE

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces

JRF/MM:hb