

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 25, 2009

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

We write today to express serious concern about the administration's planned national defense spending in Fiscal Year 2010 and beyond, which appears to be insufficient to guarantee U.S. national security in the coming years. Based on the administration's budget documents submitted thus far, it appears that a marked decrease in overall defense spending is in store for our country. If recent press accounts are accurate, this will be accomplished by canceling or postponing the acquisition of numerous major weapon systems critical to our Armed Forces and necessary to ensure their future ability to defend our country.

As Congress begins the Fiscal Year 2010 (FY10) budget process, it is our view that we have too little information on hand, based solely on the President's incomplete budget submission, to thoroughly and responsibly make decisions about top-line figures for the country's core defense program. For example, it is widely reported that the administration intends to shift funding that is currently part of the supplemental budget process into the normal DoD appropriations request. But, to date, Congress has not been told exactly what amount will be transferred, nor has it been informed about which particular programs will be affected. This lack of information raises a number of important questions, with potentially troubling answers.

The President's plan to substantially increase U.S. military force levels in Afghanistan, while simultaneously withdrawing all U.S. combat forces from Iraq by August 2010, will require substantial funding. However, it is our understanding that the administration will be requesting far less this year and next in supplemental funding, which is cause for great concern. It is unclear how the administration, if it intends to cut supplemental funding, expects to maintain our military forces in the field and enable them to conduct their missions safely and effectively. We would appreciate an explanation on this issue.

To be clear, we fully support efforts to maximize transparency in the budget process by including all foreseeable DoD requirements in the normal DoD budget request; however, by shifting major expenses from the supplemental requests to the base budget, while simultaneously slashing the supplemental request, the net effect would be a decrease in overall spending on our national defense. Our concern is that, under the guise of an "honest budgeting" approach to national security spending, we would be locking in an overall cut in military spending that either puts our troops in jeopardy today or our

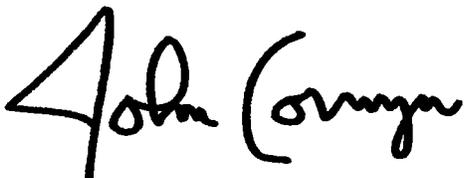
national security in jeopardy tomorrow as we restrict urgently needed capital investments in equipment such as planes, ships, and land vehicles.

As such, we request that your department provide us as soon as possible with more detailed information on what expenditures, and at what levels, you anticipate moving from the supplemental budget to the base defense budget for FY10 and what defense programs you anticipate eliminating or substantially reducing, in relation to the most recent Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). In addition, it is essential that we hear from our uniformed combatant commanders and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the potential problems they will face in carrying out their responsibilities under the administration's proposed defense spending blueprints. Accordingly, we request that you provide us, as soon as possible, risk assessments by each combatant commander, evaluating to what extent the President's proposed defense spending levels will limit their ability to meet ongoing requirements over the lifetime of the FYDP. Finally, we request that the Chairman's risk assessment, which is statutorily required and is long overdue, be provided within 30 calendar days.

During the early part of this decade, it became clear that defense spending decisions made during the 1990s and the resulting military "procurement holiday" that our government had taken left our Armed Forces without the needed advanced equipment and superior capabilities to defend our nation. Today, in the middle of a global war on terror, we must not allow that to happen again. Now is not the time to attempt to cash in a "peace dividend," while thousands of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are serving in harm's way, engaged in military operations in two major theaters of conflict overseas, with other very real threats on the horizon.

We urge you to examine these issues carefully as the administration completes work on its FY10 DoD budget request. Thank you for your service to our nation and your tireless dedication to its Armed Forces.

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator



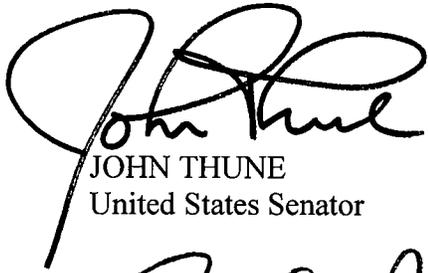
JON KYL
United States Senator



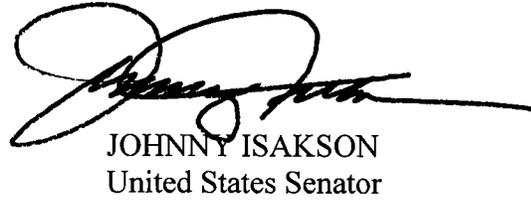
LISA MURKOWSKI
United States Senator



JAMES M. INHOFE
United States Senator



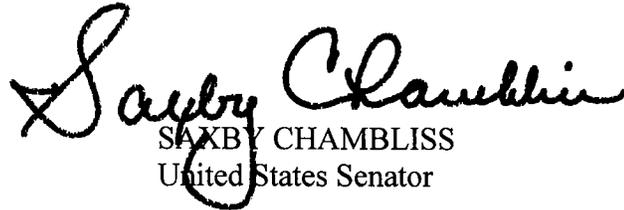
JOHN THUNE
United States Senator



JOHNNY ISAKSON
United States Senator



JIM DEMINT
United States Senator



SAXBY CHAMBLISS
United States Senator



ROGER WICKER
United States Senator



DAVID VITTER
United States Senator



ROBERT F. BENNETT
United States Senator



RICHARD BURR
United States Senator



JEFF SESSIONS
United States Senator



KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON
United States Senator