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March 5, 2020

The Honorable Mark Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper:

I write to express my deep concern about your plan to reprogram \$3.8 billion in Fiscal Year 2020 Defense Appropriations. The reprogramming targets both the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA) and the Air Force procurement for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). As congressional additions, both accounts benefitted from funds beyond those requested by the president; reprogramming represents a direct affront to congressional power under the Constitution, and will significantly disadvantage Arizona military priorities.

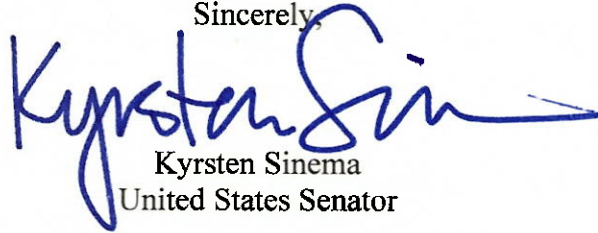
You are reprogramming \$1.3 billion from the NGREA. This targets a purposeful addition necessary to ensure the National Guard and Reserves maintain readiness and interoperability. Nearly \$400 million of these reprogrammed funds will come from the Air National Guard Air Force Reserve Command Test Center (AATC) located in Tucson, Arizona. The AATC is responsible for some of the largest savings and biggest advances in upgrading National Guard equipment. One example is the LITENING pods, which enable precision delivery of laser-guided munitions from F-16 and A-10 aircraft. The AATC's work with LITENING pods transformed older F-16 models into some of the most capable in the Air Force's fleet.

You are also redirecting \$156 million slated for advance procurement for the F-35 JSF. The JSF is an important strategic asset to the Air Force, critical to the National Defense Strategy. The U.S. plans to ultimately acquire 2,663 of the 5th generation aircraft; today we have fewer than 500. I am concerned that redirecting procurement funds will result in a continued delay of two squadrons of F-35s slated for Luke Air Force Base, leaving the U.S. lacking in capability.

It alarms me that each of the line items in the reprogramming is a specific congressional addition. Redirecting such congressional appropriations is not within the spirit of the Constitution. This reprogramming is shortsighted and does not consider the future national security of the nation. I fear the DOD is sacrificing readiness with this detrimental and counterproductive budgetary cut.

We thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kyrsten Sinema". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator