

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510  
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July 31, 2015

The Honorable Ashton Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I can't thank you enough for inviting me to accompany you on your recent trip to Fort Bragg. I regret that the Senate schedule precluded me from joining you.

It is my understanding that the senior leadership of Fort Bragg pointed out that airborne and special operations need an indigenous C-130 capability at Pope Field and that even with the remainder of the 440<sup>th</sup> Air Wing still in place, the Air Force cannot provide XVIII Airborne Corps and USASOC with what they need to train. As I noted in an earlier letter to you, Air Mobility Command's own talking points note that with the departure of the remaining planes at Pope, the Air Force system cannot handle the day to day needs of Fort Bragg.

What is more disturbing is the lengths to which the Air Force has gone to make the departure of the 440<sup>th</sup> a fait accompli, regardless of the wishes of the Congress, or more importantly the needs of the "supported" force – our paratroopers.

I have been informed by several layers of command that some in senior leadership have instructed the Pope command to:

*"Open up the clearing house to undermine the personnel structure."*

If these comments are accurate, then someone appears to be playing games with the Congress, but more importantly with the lives of people who defend us. This situation also strikes at the heart of jointness and I cringe to think what Sam Nunn or Barry Goldwater would say if they confronted a similar situation. Mr. Secretary, as I have said before, this is not about the Air Force budget, it is about supporting America's most decorated warriors – the real tip of the spear.

I respectfully request that you speak to the leaders on the ground, not the budgeteers at the Pentagon. As always, I appreciate your many courtesies to me.

Respectfully,



Thom Tillis  
U.S. Senator