

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 4, 2015

The Honorable John McHugh  
Secretary of the Army  
200 Army Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary McHugh,

Over the past few months – through U.S. Army public listening sessions, letters to the Secretary of Defense, and letters to you and your Chief of Staff, General Ray Odierno – the Alaska Congressional Delegation made it very clear – moving any U.S. Army forces out of Alaska would be a strategic blunder. Our state’s elected officials, including the Governor of Alaska, also expressed their views. These Alaskan leaders cited numerous local economic impacts and the important relationships that the U.S. Army has cultivated in Alaska. Our constituents, many of whom are veterans, showed their resolute and resounding support for keeping – and even increasing – U.S. Army forces in Alaska. Unfortunately, while it seems that U.S. Army leaders listened to these arguments, they did not fully appreciate their merit. As a result, in accordance with our Congressional responsibility to provide oversight, we request the documentation used by senior U.S. Army leadership to make this strategically short-sighted decision. In our view, the current threat environment and the location of those threats does not align with the U.S. Army’s decision to remove forces from Alaska.

From a resurgent Russia projecting its military influence into the Arctic, to an emergent China constructing islands in the South China Sea, to threats from ISIL, Iran, and North Korea, U.S. allies are increasingly apprehensive about the credibility of U.S. foreign policy. To bolster our credibility, the U.S. Army needs more forces in strategic locations like Alaska, not less. In fact, Dr. Henry Kissinger’s testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) in January confirmed the need for more U.S. forces. Dr. Kissinger stated, “The United States has not faced a more diverse and complex array of crises since the end of the Second World War.” Topping the list of increasingly diverse and complex threats, numerous senior defense leaders have recently testified and cited Russia as the top threat to U.S. national security. As a delegation, we share the concerns expressed by Generals Joe Dunford, Paul Selva, Mark Milley, and Robert Neller about Russia’s threat to U.S. national security. Unfortunately, we believe the U.S. Army failed to fully consider the importance of Alaska’s Army forces in countering Russia’s emergence as a leading threat, a fact stated by numerous senior Department of Defense leaders.

In this new, complex, and diverse threat environment, U.S. Army forces in Alaska play a pivotal role beyond deterring Russian aggression. As you are aware, the 4-25 Airborne Bridge Combat Team (ABCT) can respond to most crisis areas in the Northern Hemisphere faster than anywhere else in the continental U.S. Additionally, we believe that Alaska is home to some of the world’s greatest, most abundant, topographically-challenging, and climate-diverse joint training areas. However, it has come to our attention that Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson

(JBER) scored in the bottom third of the U.S. Army's Military Value Analysis (MVA). Needless to say, this modeling perplexes us.

Given this training discrepancy in the MVA and the long-term strategic ramifications of this decision, including how it affects operations in USNORTHCOM, USPACOM, USEUCOM, and USSTRATCOM, we feel compelled to request all of the U.S. Army's decision documents on these force structure decisions, including the entire MVA and the Total Army Analysis (TAA). We hope that the U.S. Army would – as they have already stated to our staffs – make every effort to be completely transparent about this important decision. In addition to these documents, we have also included a list of questions that will help us better understand the decision-making process that led to the reduction of 2,600 soldiers from JBER.

In the coming weeks, before the U.S. Army moves a single soldier from our state, we hope to have several honest and open discussions with you and your senior leaders regarding this decision. Like you, we hope this decision is reversible, and we will remain committed to working with U.S. Army leaders to keep U.S. Army forces in Alaska, in order to better protect the national security of the U.S.

Sincerely,



Dan Sullivan  
U.S. Senator



Lisa Murkowski  
U.S. Senator



Don Young  
Member of Congress

Enclosures: Alaska Congressional Delegation Questions – RE: U.S. Army FY2015-2017 Force Structure Reductions

cc: The Honorable Ash Carter, Secretary of Defense  
cc: General Ray Odierno, Chief of the Staff of the Army

## Alaska Congressional Delegation Questions

*RE: U.S. Army FY2015-2017 Force Structure Reductions*

### Strategic Considerations

1. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, does it make any strategic sense for the U.S. Army to reduce forward-based forces at Alaska's JBER by two-thirds since 2012, especially in the middle of Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific? Does this somewhat undermine the Rebalance?
2. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, does it make strategic – or even practical sense – to remove forces from the Arctic and our state of Alaska, before we have a strategy? Is this not a classic example of putting the cart before the horse?
3. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, from a strategic location perspective, where other than Alaska does placing an airborne BCT best address the Department of Defense's top three nation state threats of Russia, China, and North Korea?

### Arctic Strategy and U.S. Army Requirements

4. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, do pledge to fully review the U.S. Army's reductions decisions, especially in light of the emerging concerns in the Asia-Pacific, the Arctic and given that there is a pending Arctic strategy? Do you also pledge to let the new Arctic strategy inform the requirements, and not have the requirements dictate the strategy?

### 4-25 ABCT Capabilities

5. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, where would the Army's arctic training, equipment, and force projection come from, if not from the two BCTs in Alaska and could Exercise Spartan Pegasus have been done with any other Army Airborne unit in the Pacific or in CONUS?
6. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, recently, General Brooks (USARPAC) alluded that he could respond to contingencies in the South China Sea, specifically at Fire Cross Reef, utilizing the 4-25 ABCT and could do so "tonight." Following these reductions, would this still be a true statement? What is the strategic risk that we are assuming by reducing the 4-25 ABCT, in terms of both the Arctic and Pacific regions?

### Training in Alaska (MVA, F-35)

7. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, given Alaska's diverse training lands, the size of training space, the possibility for joint training and international training that already goes on, can you explain the specifics of how JBER would be in the bottom third of the training category?
8. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, given the F-35 will be the Air Force's new close-air-support platform, and that it will begin to arrive in 2019, did the Army's analysis weight the need for joint training with the F-35 in close-air-support missions? Is there anywhere else in the U.S. other than the JPARC where the Army could fully train the CAS mission with the F-35A?
9. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, given your stated desire to be transparent about this decision, will you release the entire Military Value Analysis (MVA) and Total Army

Analysis (TAA) documents for all the bases considered to U.S. Congress? Please include those documents in your response.

Role of the SECDEF in Army Decisions

10. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, in the Department of Defense the Secretary of Defense has the direct responsibility to consult with our international allies and friends. Was the Secretary of Defense consulted in this decision, and if not, why was he not consulted in a decision which impacts important force structure in strategic OCONUS locations, like Alaska and Hawaii?

Sequestration

11. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, if the Congress fixes Sequestration, will Army Force structure automatically return to 490K or above, or will it remain at the 2014 QDR level of 450K?

FY2016 NDAA

12. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, to what extent was Section 1043 of the Senate-passed FY2016 NDAA considered in the U.S Army's decision to reduce forces in Alaska? In your personal opinion, is it strategically wise to reduce forces in the Arctic before we have a new Arctic strategy and OPLAN?
13. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, to what extent was Section 1262 of the FY2016 Senate-passed NDAA considered in the U.S Army's decision to reduce forces in Alaska?