



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

7/11/2017

The Honorable Michael R. Turner
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Turner:

Thank you for asking the Department to comment on your amendment, 122.115-23, that would strike the Space Corps provision from the House NDAA and allow the Department to conduct the proper due diligence on the strategic viability of such an entity. I do not routinely comment on potential floor amendments to pending legislation; however, this particular issue warrants a response.

I strongly urge Congress to reconsider the proposal of a separate service Space Corps. At a time when we are trying to integrate the Department's joint warfighting functions, I do not wish to add a separate service that would likely present a narrower and even parochial approach to space operations vice an integrated one we're constructing under our current approach. Because our Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines have their own equities in maintaining vital space operations, a properly integrated approach is better for carrying out this mission.

I share Congressional concerns about the organization and management of the Department's space capabilities. As Congress directed the FY 2017 NDAA, the Department has closely examined this issue and will provide our final response in September 2017. To date there have been only limited hearings in advance of proposing a separate Space Corps, and we need the opportunity to engage with all concerned stakeholders with equity in this issue.

I look forward to working with Congress to implement necessary military space organizational changes. That said, I believe it is premature to add additional organizational and administrative tail to the Department at a time I am trying to reduce overhead. The creation of an independent Space Corps, with the corresponding institutional growth and budget implications, does not address the specific concerns nor our Nation's fiscal problems in a responsive manner.

Because of the impact of 30 continuing resolutions over a 10-year period, we have been unable to take steps that would have assuaged Congressional concerns. Addressing this problem starts with ending defense Budget Control Act caps and ending continuing resolutions, not worsening a situation the Congress is rightfully trying to address. Removing Budget Control Act caps and eliminating a continuing resolution are the surest ways to take this issue - enhancing our space capabilities - in the direction desired without risking negative second and third-order effects on our warfighting abilities and the fiscal solvency of our Nation.

John Mather