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November 7, 2011

The Honorable Leon Panetta  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1300 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1300

Dear Secretary Panetta:

I write regarding the Department of Defense's development of an AirSea Battle operational concept. As you know, this effort was initiated in September 2009 in a classified memorandum of agreement signed by the Air Force Chief of Staff and Chief of Naval Operations and then formally mandated by the 2010 QDR. Despite reports throughout 2011 that AirSea Battle had been completed in an executive summary form, to my knowledge Members of Congress have yet to be briefed on its conclusions or in any way made a part of the process. This support will be critical if this concept is to be both properly resourced and enduring.

I believe a mature AirSea Battle operational concept will allow our military to sustain a level of deterrence that can provide our Commander-in-Chief with a range of options during a crisis, while also reassuring our allies in regions where competitors are developing anti-access/area-denial capabilities. If executed successfully, it should also help to drive integration in both operational planning and procurement decisions between the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force. I understand the effort to initiate a shift of this magnitude is a demanding one, but I believe the challenges that have led the Department to develop this operational concept warrant an ambitious effort of this nature.

I was encouraged to hear your recent testimony before the House Armed Service Committee that you "believe that Congress must be a full partner in our efforts to protect the country." Accordingly, I believe the development of this operational concept, like AirLand Battle during the late 1970s and early 1980s, will require the support of the Congress if it is to be both successful and enduring. As you will recall, after AirLand Battle was finalized in 1980 the Army worked to build a consensus around the effort, first within the Department and then with Members of Congress through a series of briefings. These briefings described the doctrine and the weapons coming into production that would form the basis of this major doctrinal transition. With Congress' support, AirLand Battle received the proper resources that led to a revolution in

the way America's Army and Air Force conducted joint operations. If AirSea Battle is to have similar success, the Congress will have to be made a full partner in this effort.

As AirSea Battle moves from the development stage to implementation, I am eager to understand how you plan to make Congress part of this process. More specifically, what is the overall fiscal program required to support the basic concept? In the short term, I would also appreciate a brief to better understand the findings of the Department's two-year effort to comprehend the challenges created by sophisticated A2/AD environments and the operational and tactical demands that will be required to sustain our freedom of action in these theaters.

Sincerely,



J. Randy Forbes  
Member of Congress

CC: UnderSecretary of Defense for Policy  
Secretary of the Navy  
Chief of Naval Operations  
Secretary of the Air Force  
Chief of the Air Force