

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Australia—Upgrade Program for (24) MH-60R Multi-Mission Helicopters

The Government of Australia has requested a follow-on case for a possible ten-year upgrade program for twenty-four (24) MH-60R Multi-Mission Helicopters and associated training devices, spare and repair parts, support and test equipment, engineering and technical services, U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical and logistics support services, Engineering Change Proposals (ECPs), ECPs for training devices, classified software (JMPS/MDLs), Engineering Technical Assistance (ETA), Logistics Technical Assistance (LTA), Other Technical Assistance (OTA), supply support, support equipment, and other related elements of logistics and program support. The total estimated program cost is \$360 million.

This sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a major non-NATO ally that continues to be an important force for political stability and economic progress in the Western Pacific. It is vital to the U.S. national interest to assist our ally in developing and maintaining a strong and ready self-defense capability.

The proposed upgrades to the MH-60R helicopters will improve Australia's antisubmarine and surface warfare capability, provide an improved search and rescue capability, enhance its anti-ship surveillance capability, and will help it carry out international commitments for transport, surveillance, and search and rescue operations with the United States and other allies. The proposed upgrades will also provide Australia the resources necessary to properly maintain its multi-mission helicopters. Australia will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor will be Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin Company, Stratford, CT and Lockheed Martin, Owego, NY. There are no offsets proposed in connection with this potential sale.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives to Australia.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17-45

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology:

1. The Commonwealth of Australia requirement for spiral upgrades to the twenty-four (24) Multi-Mission MH-60R Helicopters could include:

a. Mission Capability Areas: Surface Warfare/Surveillance/Flight Management, Navigation & Communication/Data Management & Fusion

b. Mission Capability Areas: Anti-Submarine Warfare/Flight Management, Navigation & Communication

c. Mission Capability Areas: Flight Management, Navigation & Communication/Data Management & Fusion

d. Mission Capability Areas: Flight Management, Navigation & Communication/Data Management & Fusion/Air Vehicle Service Life

e. Mission Capability Areas for Development: Kinematic Performance/Airborne Survivability

f. Mission Capability Areas for Development: Obsolescence Management

g. Mission Capability Areas: Surveillance/Data Management & Data/Air Vehicle Service Life

h. Software Lab

1. USN Test Maintenance Cost

2. The spiral development case may contain sensitive technology; however, defined requirements are not known at this time and will be assessed on a case by case basis.

3. A determination has been made that Australia can provide substantially the same degree of protection for the sensitive technology being released as the U.S. Government. This sale is necessary in furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the Policy Justification.

4. All defense articles and services listed in this transmittal have been authorized for release and export to Australia.

NATIONAL SENIOR CENTER MONTH

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, September marks National Senior Center Month. More than 11,000 senior centers across the country serve more than 1 million older adults every day. For many older Americans, senior centers are the heart of their communities, offering a place for everything from meals to recreational activities to health and wellness programs. Senior centers also create a sense of comity and community, giving older Americans a place to connect while reducing the social isolation that often burdens our older citizens.

This summer, as ranking member of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, I visited numerous senior centers across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in rural, urban, and suburban areas, to discuss the issues on the minds of older Pennsylvanians. At each stop, older Pennsylvanians told me about the important role that senior centers play in their daily lives, as a gathering place and a resource, providing not only necessary nutrition programs, but also benefits counseling, employment assistance, volunteer opportunities, transportation assistance, and so much more.

Senior centers and senior center staff deserve our support. Communities piece together numerous sources to fund their senior center operations, including Federal, State, and local government resources, private-sector donations and grants, and the man-hours of countless volunteers. Many of the county commissioners who joined me during these visits expressed their support for the Community Development Block Grant, which regrettably is slated for elimination by the administration. Counties throughout Pennsylvania depend on the Community Development Block Grant program to fund important infrastructure in our communities. Now is not the time to scale back our investment in these needs. I stand with our community leaders in support of the Community Development Block Grant program, and I will fight to protect these vital resources from elimination.

I am delighted to join with leaders from across the aging network in Penn-

sylvanian and throughout the country in honoring the work of senior centers and recognizing September as National Senior Center Month.

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CARIBOU COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, 30 years ago, Caribou, ME, served as the proving ground upon which America has built a nationwide system of community-based outpatient clinics that delivers much improved access to medical services for America's rural veterans. The anniversary celebration on September 7 recognizes the determined commitment of Cary Medical Center, the Department of Veterans Affairs, local veterans, and an entire community that transformed healthcare for the men and women who defend our Nation and our freedom.

Our Nation's first CBOC held its formal opening in Caribou, my hometown, on June 13, 1987. The impact was immediate—no longer would the veterans of Aroostook County have to endure an up-to 10-hour round trip to the nearest VA hospital for medical exams or to meet with a VA physician. Today the Caribou CBOC treats a veteran population of 3,500 men and women who served our country, with more than 9,000 care visits annually. The pioneering work done in Caribou led to benefits for America's 3.5 million rural veterans who now receive care closer to home at more than 950 CBOCs throughout the country.

The story of the great advancement in healthcare began 8 years before that formal opening, when seven Aroostook County veterans devoted themselves to the mission of improving access to critical healthcare services in this region. The original members of Aroostook County Veterans Medical Facility Research and Development, Inc.—Percy Thibeault, Meo Bosse, John Rowe, Ray Guerrette, Wesley Adams, Walter Corey, and Leonard Woods, Jr.—faced many obstacles along the way and overcame them all. These patriots exemplified a special quality of the American veteran: they continued to contribute long after their service in uniform was done.

That great mission would not have been accomplished without the dedication and expertise of Cary Medical Center and the involvement of Bill Flagg. As the American Hospital Association noted in its Award of Honor presentation in 2011, Cary Medical Center has made exemplary contributions in the critical area of veterans' healthcare and has established a national model. In addition to playing a vital role in establishing the VA's first CBOC in Caribou, Cary Medical Center was one of five pilot sites for the highly successful Access Received Closer to Home, or ARCH, program. Maine's program, led by Kris Doody and a tremendous team of professionals, has been called a standard bearer for how to provide

rural veterans access to the care they need in their communities. Before he became VA Secretary, I had the opportunity to join Dr. David Shulkin on a visit to both the Caribou CBOC and Cary Medical Center, where he praised the innovative work being done being done to provide veterans with top quality healthcare close to where they live. Veterans in Aroostook County and throughout America are grateful for Cary's leadership.

Our State has long history as a leader in working to expand and improve veterans' access to quality healthcare. One year ago, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the very first national hospital for veterans: Togus, in Maine, which opened its doors in November of 1866. In 2014, we celebrated the opening of the women's clinic at Togus in recognition of the fact that more and more women serve our country in uniform.

I am determined to continue those early efforts on behalf of our rural veterans. The recent enactment of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017, which I cosponsored with my Maine colleague Senator ANGUS KING, is an important step toward keeping this obligation to our veterans, both urban and rural. As well as providing additional funding for healthcare access in the community, the legislation authorizes 28 leases for VA facilities across the country, including a much-needed CBOC in Portland. The result of this crucial legislation is increased access to quality care for all who have defended our freedom.

Maine is home to more than 125,000 veterans. To put that in perspective, Maine has more veterans per capita than all but two of the other States in the country. We are proud of our State's contributions to protecting our Nation and of Maine's impressive record in caring for our veterans.

President Abraham Lincoln signed the legislation establishing a national network of hospitals for Civil War veterans on March 3, 1865. The very next day, he concluded his second inaugural address with a commitment "to bind up our nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle. . . ."

We must uphold that commitment. Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country. We owe them all that we can do to ensure they receive the best care possible. The veterans and grateful citizens who fought for the Caribou CBOC knew that, and, on this 30th anniversary, we honor their dedication by carrying on their work.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT GENERAL FREDRICK B. "BEN" HODGES

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to a great leader and an exceptional Army officer, LTG Frederick B. "Ben" Hodges who is currently serving as the commanding general of U.S. Army Europe in Wiesbaden, Germany, as he prepares for his transition and retirement from Active Duty.

LTG Ben Hodges has served our Army and our Nation for more than 35 years. He has been a true professional and a dedicated soldier, leader, and officer. Throughout his career, he has commanded our great soldiers at many levels, he has deployed to combat numerous times in defense of the Nation, and he has been assigned the most critical positions in our Army. Lieutenant General Hodges continues to provide outstanding leadership, advice, and sound professional judgment on numerous critical issues of enduring importance to the Army, Congress, and this Nation.

A native of Quincy, FL, Lieutenant General Hodges graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in May 1980 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant of infantry. After his first assignment in an infantry unit in Germany, he commanded infantry units at the company, battalion, and brigade levels in the 101st Airborne Division and in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom during the initial invasion of Iraq as Bastogne 6, leading the 327th Infantry Regiment.

Throughout his magnificent career, Lieutenant General Hodges has served in a variety of important positions within the U.S. Army, proving over and over again his exceptional leadership and staff skills. These positions include service as a tactics Instructor at the Infantry school, aide-de-camp to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and service as both the deputy chief and then chief of legislative, liaison for the U.S. Army in Washington, D.C.

Lieutenant General Hodges' assignments as a general officer include deputy commander for stability, Regional Command-South, International Security Assistance Force supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan from August 2009 until October 2010. Before arriving in Germany, Lieutenant General Hodges also held a leadership position at NATO, serving as the first commander of Allied Land Command, Izmir, Turkey, from November 2012 to October 2014.

For the past 3 years, Lieutenant General Hodges has been the commanding general of United States U.S. Army Europe. During this period of extraordinary change and challenge in Europe's security environment, Lieutenant General Hodges has improved relationships with NATO allies and European partners. Through his leadership, Lieutenant General Hodges has successfully led his command through some of the most complex issues our Army has faced in recent years with unparalleled results. While increasing the transparency of Army operations within Europe, Lieutenant General Hodges has led his command through the rapid growth in the frequency and complexity of multinational training exercises, thus increasing interoperability and strengthening NATO's commitment to deter potential aggression. The foundations set by Lieutenant General Hodges will allow NATO and

our Army to meet every mission requirement in Europe.

On behalf of Congress and the United States of America, I thank LTG Ben Hodges, his wife, Holly, and their entire family for their continued commitment, sacrifice, and contribution to this great Nation. I join my colleagues in wishing him future success in all aspects of life and I am sure that many soldiers will continue to emulate him as a role model for service, sacrifice, and leadership.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

• Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, today I am proud to stand to honor Phyllis Schlafly, a woman who was not only an incredible Missourian, but an incredible American. She was a strong conservative, engaged citizen, proud wife and mother, powerful speaker, passionate lawyer, devout Catholic, and good friend of mine. We lost her a year ago, and I take this moment today to pay tribute to her and the impact she had on our Nation.

There is no doubt that the name Phyllis Schlafly will be mentioned in the history of conservatism.

Upon Phyllis's receiving of the Women of Achievement Award in 1963, publisher of St. Louis Globe-Democrat Richard Amberg stated that "Phyllis Schlafly stands for everything that has made America great and for those things which will keep it that way."

Our late President, Ronald Reagan, said to Phyllis Schlafly, "Eagle Forum has set a high standard of volunteer participation in the political and legislative process. . . . You've been out front on so many of the most important issues of our time. . . . Your work is an example to all those who would struggle for an America that is prosperous and free. . . . Our nation needs the kind of dedicated individual volunteer service you and Eagle Forum have demonstrated over the last 20 years."

Phyllis was born and raised in St. Louis, MO. She attended college at Washington University and received her master of arts degree at Radcliffe College. She married John Fred Schlafly, Jr., in 1949 and had six children. In 1972, Phyllis established Eagle Forum, and her work to strengthen conservative principles flourished from there. Her voice became the conservative conscience of the GOP, and she was never afraid to let me or any other member of the Republican Party know when she felt we were not true to those ideals.

While I wish today to commemorate her upon the anniversary of her death, I would be remiss if I didn't point out that her passing did not end her life's work.

Her legacy of strong conservative values continues today through organizations, books, and through the passion