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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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September 10, 2015

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Defense  
House Appropriations Committee  
H-405 The Capitol

The Honorable Pete Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
House Appropriations Committee  
2328 Rayburn HOB

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn HOB

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn HOB

RE: Urge Avoidance of Budget Shutdown and Continuing Resolution in Support of America's National Security interests

Dear Chairmen Frelinghuysen & Thornberry and Ranking Members Visclosky & Smith:

Thank you for your long-time service to America's armed forces and your diligent work to promote America's national security interests. There is increasing concern and alarm in my district that the Congress is on a path to unnecessary budget turmoil this fall and that the consequences to our military missions will be serious. I urge you to use your influence and talents to help the Congress pass a regular appropriations package and avoid a government shutdown and passage of a continuing resolution ("CR"). An unnecessary shutdown or CR would have very harmful impacts to America's national security mission.

I represent the district that is home to MacDill Air Force Base ("MacDill"), the 6<sup>th</sup> Air Mobility Wing and 39 Mission Teammates, including the United States Central Command ("CENTCOM") and United States Special Operations Command ("SOCOM"). Servicemembers and commanders are increasingly concerned with the costly impact to their missions caused by congressional budget uncertainty. They are unable to effectively and confidently plan for military operations due to the threat of a government shutdown and a CR. They also advise that the inability to plan, to execute timely contracts and to understand the direction of Congress ends up costing them critical resources.

The sequester, past government shutdowns and CRs have taken their toll on our military missions. I know you hear directly from military leaders, but the concern back home continues to grow. For example, at CENTCOM, it is difficult to cement the strategic military collaborations in the Middle East if America cannot commit the resources and demonstrate follow-through on its plans. Reliance on Overseas Contingency Operations (“OCO”) also complicates CENTCOM’s and SOCOM’s operations. I strongly urge you to transfer much of the ongoing operations to the base budget. CENTCOM, SOCOM and the branches will find ways to fight to ensure the mission is carried out even with uncertain or incomplete resources, but the Congress does them no favors with such uncertainty. In fact, it costs them money as contracts are delayed and rebid. I know you would agree that we want our military commanders and servicemembers focused on their missions and not congressional budget fights.

Another impact of the sequester and budget uncertainty involves the “freeze” on new base housing that Air Mobility Command is now enforcing across its bases. At MacDill, the housing contractor is ready to commence the next phase, the base commander supports moving forward, a long waiting list for base housing exists and congestion grows outside the base gate. Nevertheless, it appears that Congress will kick the can down the road again when it comes to appropriations, and expanded and convenient base housing for servicemembers involved in the critical missions at MacDill will become an afterthought.

Thank you for allowing me to pass on some of the frustrations of servicemembers and military leaders at MacDill and its Command centers. The defense industry across the Tampa Bay area also shares these concerns. It impacts their businesses as well. The military technologies developed Tampa Bay area businesses over the past decade have improved our military capabilities, but that growth is at risk under sequester, CRs and OCO outside the base budget. If the uncertainty persists it could endanger national security, on top of the already stalled economic expansion and job growth. The same goes for appropriations for education, health, medical research and more, but the growing chorus of frustration back at MacDill required direct correspondence to you as one of the top leaders on military matters in the Congress.

Thank you for your leadership and devotion to America’s military. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Legislative Director, Elizabeth Brown, at 202-225-3376.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor  
U.S. Representative  
Florida – District 14