

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 2, 2023

The Honorable Frank Kendall
Secretary of The Air Force
Department of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary Kendall:

We write today in strong opposition to your recent decision to reduce and consolidate the Active-Duty Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) enterprise by removing them from their basing with U.S. Army divisions. Reducing air support operations squadrons (ASOS) from eight to two locations will significantly impair the Air Force's ability to provide tactical Command and Control of close air support to the U.S. Army. This reduction and consolidation of personnel is short-sighted, and we urge you to reconsider your decision.

The Army 2030 force structure is designed to highlight the importance of the "division as the tactical unit of action...where decisive maneuver is executed."¹ Your decision to consolidate and realign TACPs will remove organic air support capabilities from the division and place them at the corps level. This will significantly degrade the ability of Army divisions to integrate close air support into their training cycles and will result in decreased readiness. Army divisions at Ft Drum, NY; Ft Bliss, TX; Ft Riley, KS; Ft Carson, CO; Ft Stewart, GA; and Ft Campbell, KY each have unique institutional relationships with their ASOS units. Furthermore, any soldier who has been in a "danger close" engagement and has trusted a TACP operator to call in effective fires will attest to the mutual trust they develop through close integration. Breaking these relationships will create a gap in expertise at the expense of the warfighter and will force division commanders to assume greater risk across all domains.

Both the 2022 National Defense Strategy and National Security Strategy emphasize the Joint Force's ability to deploy a combat-ready force on short notice as a critical component of deterrence.² Keeping air support operations squadrons basing with Army divisions will enable them to maintain the necessary close air support proficiency to execute short-notice global missions. As our adversaries take advantage of global instability, our forces must be able to credibly deter and quickly respond to attacks across multiple theatres. It is critical that we maintain TACPs in combat-proven roles across the services. If you make hasty decisions to reduce the authorization and consolidate organization across the TACP enterprise without fully considering the impacts to readiness and deterrence, you will put our warfighters at a disadvantage and embolden our adversaries.

¹ Simerly, Mark; T. "Confronting the Changing Sustainment Battlefield Calculus." U.S. Army, 31 Aug. 2022, www.army.mil/article/259612/confronting_the_changing_sustainment_battlefield_calculus.


² 2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America, U.S. Department of Defense, 27 Oct. 2022, media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF.

As such, we request your response to the following questions no later than December 1, 2023.

1. Have you consulted with the U.S. Army on your decision to consolidate and realign eight Army divisions to two Army corps? If so, what are the U.S. Army's concerns with this decision and were those taken into consideration?
2. What capabilities will the divisions at Ft Drum, NY; Ft Bliss, TX; Ft Riley, KS; Ft Carson, CO; Ft Stewart, GA; and Ft Campbell, KY lose if this decision is finalized and executed?
3. What analysis was conducted on how this decision will impact the readiness of these U.S. Army divisions and will it impact their ability to rapidly deploy?
4. How is the U.S. Air Force planning to mitigate the risks they are assuming by impairing Joint Force readiness?

Additionally, we are requesting that you provide a briefing on how the U.S. Air Force came to this decision. Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress



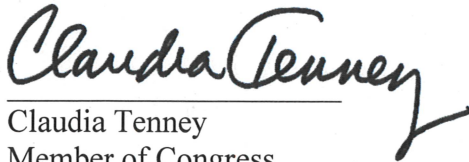
Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



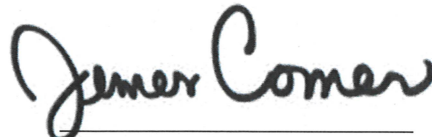
Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress



Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress



James Comer
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Tracey Mann
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