

United States Senate

May 5, 2016

The Honorable Deborah Lee James
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Secretary James:

I write today as a follow-up to the letter I received from you on May 5, 2016, stating that the Air Force has still not made a decision on the acquisition strategy for replacing the Vietnam era UH-1N helicopter. Due to the urgent security risk caused by your delayed decision, I strongly request you consider utilizing the National Guard and their HH-60M Blackhawk helicopters until the Air Force replaces the UH-1N.

As you know, the nuclear security forces located at Malmstrom, Minot and F.E Warren Air Force Bases all depend on UH-1N helicopters that do not meet requirements to provide quick reaction force protection and convoy security to our nuclear weapons. I have been informed that the Air Force has utilized the HH-60M Blackhawk helicopters in Mighty Guardian Exercises successfully before, and the National Guard has these ready to carry out this mission immediately. The security of our nation's most powerful weapons must be a top priority for the Air Force, and due to their ability to fix the security gap, utilizing the National Guard must strongly be considered.

I thank you for your attention to this important priority and look forward to working with you to find the best solution.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator