

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today released the following statement in response to comments made by the Pentagon about the VH-71 presidential helicopter program. Hinchey, who is a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, helped secure \$485.2 million for the continued development of Increment 1 of the VH-71 presidential helicopter program. He will be serving on the House-Senate conference committee that's expected to meet next week to determine funding for the helicopter.

"The Pentagon is once again misleading the public about its proposed presidential helicopter plan. It is offering incomplete information and citing figures that are directly contradicted by its own internal documents.

"The VH-71 Increment 1 helicopters have met or exceeded all performance parameters as set by the Navy and are without question superior to the aging legacy aircraft. Should Congress succeed in restarting this program, the helicopters could be delivered to the White House lawn in 2012.

"The plan the Pentagon has in place to replace the VH-71 presidential helicopter program would cost three times as much as the Increment 1 compromise solution and delay delivery of the first helicopter by 12 years. While there have been budgetary concerns about the VH-71 program, they have been focused on the Increment 2 phase of the program. The compromise solution is an expanded Increment 1 phase that would provide the White House with a full fleet of 23 helicopters within the original budget requirements of the program. Increment 2 is off the table.

"A Navy document made public in a Congressional Research Service report shows that the Pentagon's plan to start over from scratch would cost \$10-\$17 billion. When you add in the \$4 billion in sunk costs on the VH-71 program and an additional \$1.2 billion to extend the life of the fleet currently used by the White House that figure grows to \$15-\$22 billion. The Pentagon repeatedly ignores the sunk costs and life extension costs when they cite figures. By contrast, the Increment 1 compromise solution would fit within the original contract's budget constraints of \$6.8 billion.

"Furthermore, the Pentagon recently issued an Initial Capability Document (ICD) for what it wants in a new presidential helicopter replacement program. That ICD demonstrates that what the Pentagon is seeking for its new replacement helicopter is nearly identical to the capability of

the VH-71 Increment 1 helicopter, which it's trying to kill.

"Additionally, if the Increment 1 compromise solution is continued then the first helicopters could be on the White House lawn in 2012. The new Pentagon proposal wouldn't produce helicopters for White House use until 2024, which would require a Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) -- a course of action that a draft of the ICD described as creating "high operational risk and uncertainty" for the presidential helicopter fleet. The presidential helicopter fleet currently used by the White House was designed in the 1950's and constructed in the 1970's. It's routinely undergoing significant maintenance just to stay operational.

"The acquisition culture at the Pentagon is broken. Rather than salvage the first Increment of the VH-71 program, the Pentagon wants to walk away from nearly \$4 billion, pretend those sunk costs never existed, and initiate a far more expensive replacement program. What we've proposed in Congress is a way forward that saves taxpayers money and ensures the timely delivery of a new helicopter fleet that can safely and effectively transport this and future presidents."