

*Owego, NY* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Congressman Michael A. Arcuri (D-NY) today visited Lockheed Martin's VH-71 Marine One helicopter production site in Owego to get an update on the project from Lockheed Martin management and address a large group of workers about their latest efforts in Congress to protect the presidential helicopter program. The two House members have been leading the effort in Washington to ensure the project continues moving forward.

"The work that's being done here in Owego for the new Marine One helicopter is critical to the safety and security of this president and all future holders of that office," Hinchey said. "We are working very hard in Washington to ensure that this extremely important project continues moving forward. We must not let detractors of this project distort the facts and try to impede this initiative through one liners in the media. Let's be very clear: the current fleet of presidential helicopters are more than 30 years old, are not equipped with the latest security and communications technology, and must be replaced. Lockheed Martin is doing an outstanding job of putting together a new fleet of helicopters. I am extremely appreciative of all the work and effort the employees of Lockheed Martin have put into this presidential helicopter program. We will fight for you and the work you do and for the safety and security of the President of the United States."

"The Marine One helicopter program is vital not just for the security of the President of the United States, but for the local jobs and economic growth it provides in our region," Arcuri said. "The hard-working men and women at Lockheed Martin-Owego must be commended for their continued commitment to national security and the Southern Tier economy. Representative Hinchey and I will continue to fight tirelessly in Washington to protect the critical presidential helicopter program and all the important security work here at Lockheed Martin."

Earlier this week, Hinchey and Arcuri visited the Navy's Washington, DC testing facility for the new helicopters to receive an updated classified briefing from Navy officials on the details of the helicopter and the need to replace the current aging fleet. Today's visit to Owego, enabled Hinchey and Arcuri to see the continued production of the helicopters in person and to get a firsthand look at how the company is working aggressively to provide the president with a state of the art helicopter that will keep him and all future officeholders secure.

The VH-71 helicopter project has gotten recent attention in Washington because it now stands to cost more than the original contract. Hinchey and Arcuri have noted that the budget for the new helicopter fleet has risen as the result of changes the Bush administration made while the

project was underway. Hinchey personally spoke with White House and Navy officials earlier this month to convey the many reasons why he felt the VH-71 helicopter project should proceed forward.

Last week, Hinchey and Arcuri led 11 other House members in a bipartisan effort calling on President Obama to proceed with the replacement of the Marine One helicopter fleet in order to adequately protect the President of the United States and to avoid wasting the \$3 billion in taxpayer money that has already been spent on the project. Lockheed Martin in Owego, New York is leading the project to replace the current fleet of presidential helicopters, which are more than 30 years-old.

Acknowledging that the program is over budget for a variety of reasons, Hinchey and Arcuri proposed an alternative way forward to the president that would involve expanding Increment 1 of the project, which has already produced eight helicopters that are currently undergoing test flights, in lieu of moving onto Increment 2 -- the more costly phase of the project. By expanding the number of Increment 1 helicopters, it's estimated that the Navy could purchase a full fleet of 23 Increment 1 helicopters on-time and within the original budget plan.

Hinchey and Arcuri noted that their visit to the Navy testing facility in Washington, DC earlier this week made it clear to them that the Increment 1 fleet is a major improvement over the current aging fleet, but that the Increment 2 aircraft would be much more superior to those in Increment 1. The House members said that the Navy and White House should continue to advocate for Increment 2 to go through as planned and only turn to an increased Increment 1 fleet as a last resort.

The helicopter that the president primarily uses was constructed in 1976. The effort to replace the current fleet of presidential helicopters began following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks when it became clear that an aircraft was needed to more adequately protect the president and enable him to communicate during a crisis with top officials on the ground. In 2005, the presidential helicopter replacement contract was awarded to Lockheed Martin and its partners.

The contract calls for nine Increment 1 helicopters, including four test aircraft, which are far more modern and capable than the current fleet. Increment 1 was to be followed by 23 Increment 2 helicopters. Eight of the Increment 1 helicopters have already been constructed and are meeting or exceeding all of their performance parameters during their hundreds of

hours of test flights.