

Washington, DC - U.S. Reps John Hall (D-NY19) and Maurice Hinchey (D-NY22) today sent a letter to General Norton A. Schwartz, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, calling for an update on obtaining C-17 Globemaster III aircrafts for the 105th Airlift Wing at Stewart Air National Guard Base (ANGB) in Newburgh, New York. Currently, Stewart is using the C-5A aircraft, which are some of the oldest in the inventory and will need to be retired in the next few years. Last year, Hall and Hinchey voted to fund an additional 15 C-17 aircraft as part of the Fiscal Year 2008 Supplemental Appropriations measure. However, these aircraft have yet to reach the 105th Airlift Wing.

"Failure to replace the aging C-5A fleet will jeopardize the future of the Wing and potentially affect the lives of thousands who live in the area," wrote Hinchey and Hall. "It is time that we move forward with intent of Congress to replace the aging C-5A aircraft with the more capable, and much needed C-17's."

After the Supplemental Appropriations measure was enacted into law, the plan to convert the 105th to C-17s in calendar year 2010 had been placed on hold and is in jeopardy of changing due to an Air Force-wide study called the Mobility and Capabilities Requirements Study (MCRS). In addition, the results of this study may recommend that even its C-5B aircraft be retired rather than modernized based on the Air Force's long term strategic airlift fleet mix and basing plans.

The 105th Airlift Wing at Stewart has some of the oldest C-5As in the Air Force inventory. As one of only two National Guard bases on the Eastern Seaboard that provides transatlantic flights to service members abroad, Stewart provides essential services for U.S. armed forces, especially in the responsive delivery of both heavy and light forces and cargo to meet rapid deployment.

Together, the House members wrote to urge the Air Force for an update on the plan for the future of the 105th and Stewart ANGB and to express their full support in moving forward with the replacement of the 105th Airlift Wing's aging fleet with the C-17.

The full text of Hinchey and Hall's letter is below.

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March 31, 2009

General Norton A. Schwartz
Chief of Staff
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear General Schwartz:

As members of the New York congressional delegation, we are writing to request details on the future plans the Air Force has developed for the 105th Airlift Wing, Stewart Air National Guard Base (ANGB) in Newburgh, New York. We specifically would like information on the aircraft that will replace the Wing's aging C-5A galaxy aircraft.

The 105th's C-5As, which are some of the oldest in the inventory, will need to be retired in the next few years. Failure to replace the aging C-5A fleet will jeopardize the future of the Wing and potentially affect the lives of thousands who live in the area. The Air Force recently cut the number of C-5 aircraft that it will modernize under the Reliability Enhancement and Re-engineering Program (RERP) and will not modernize any of its C-5As due to the substantial cost increase of the program. These cuts could continue for its C-5B models when the Air Force completes its pending Mobility and Capabilities Requirements Study (MCRS). In addition, the results of this study may recommend that even its C-5B aircraft be retired rather than modernized based on the Air Force's long term strategic airlift fleet mix and basing plans.

Last year, the New York National Guard was advised that a plan was in place to convert the 105th to C-17s in calendar year 2010. This plan was predicated on the fact that the Air Force received funds for an additional 15 C-17 aircraft in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Supplemental Appropriations Act (Public Law 110-252). We recently learned that this action has been placed on hold and is in jeopardy of changing as the Air Force undertakes the MCRS. Until the study is completed this fall, the additional 15 C-17 aircraft funded in the FY08 Supplemental will be used as Backup Aircraft Inventory (BAI) for the Air Force instead of being utilized to cascade C-17 aircraft to the 105th Airlift Wing. This delay will mean that no decisions on strategic airlift force

structure and future stationing of C-17 aircraft will be made until at least 2010. We are concerned that purchasing new C-17s through the FY08 Supplemental and then placing other C-17s into a BAI status while continuing operations abroad does not support the intent of Congress in appropriating funds for these additional aircraft.

Given the uncertainties regarding the outcome of the MCRS study and the Air Force's intent on funding the C-5 modernization programs, we respectfully request an update on the plan for the future of the 105th and Stewart ANGB. As members of Congress who represent Stewart ANG base and its workforce, you will have our full support in moving forward with the replacement of the 105th Airlift Wing's aging fleet with the C-17.

Sincerely,

Maurice Hinchey John Hall