

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 22, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
United States Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

We write to express concern regarding press reporting that the Biden Administration has declined the Ukrainian government's highest-priority military equipment transfer request of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS).

The American people and their representatives in Congress have strongly supported arming Ukraine to defend its homeland against Russian tyranny. Toward this end, Congress provided the Pentagon with appropriations and drawdown authority to provide Ukraine the necessary firepower. Ukrainian successes on the battlefield are encouraging, but Vladimir Putin's intent to conquer all of Ukraine remains unchanged. The timely provision of effective lethal aid to stabilize Ukrainian defenses and enable long-term resistance against future Russian aggression remains urgent.

Ukraine's Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov and Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.S. Oksana Markarova have repeatedly requested the MQ-1C Gray Eagle. This particular UAS will increase Ukraine's unmanned capabilities in the near-term and demands careful reconsideration. This system's operational attributes—availability, lethality, survivability, and exportability—complement existing weapon systems used by the Ukrainians and will increase the lethality of the Ukrainian military.

The MQ-1C's short training timeline of 27 days and availability for transfer present a profound near-term upgrade to Ukraine's military. Rocket and gun artillery are essential to Russian military operations in Ukraine today, but they are vulnerable to UAS attacks against artillery formations and logistics hubs. The MQ-1C could erode Russia's long-range fires advantage. Most importantly, armed UAS could find and attack Russian warships in the Black Sea, breaking its coercive blockade and alleviate dual pressures on the Ukrainian economy and global food prices.

Turkish TB-2 drones have demonstrated the success of unmanned airpower in this conflict. Given the Grey Eagle's 29,000 foot service ceiling and advanced survivability systems, the MQ-1C will provide a much-needed leap in capability to complement the TB-2. Moreover, if targeted by larger Russian surface-to-air missiles, Ukrainian forces can track and cue follow-on attacks against higher-valued Russian targets, presenting an operational advantage.

While U.S. technology security merits appropriate attention to transfer risks, the platform's adaptability enables the swapping of advanced U.S.-specific sensors for alternatives vetted for transfer to allies and partners. The weapon system configurations for the MQ-1C, specifically AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, have been reviewed and exported to over twenty-five U.S. partners.

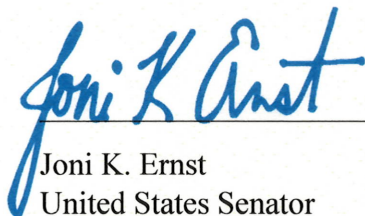
On the battlefield, the MQ-1C reliably pairs effectively with the HIMARS and missiles. The MQ-1C, along with already provided long-range fires capabilities, provides Ukraine additional lethality needed to eject Russian forces and regain occupied territory. The long-term upside of providing Ukraine with the MQ-1C is significant and has the potential to drive the strategic course of the war in Ukraine's favor.

Transferring the MQ-1C Gray Eagle was under consideration for months across 24 assistance packages. The introduction of Iranian UAS systems supporting Russian objectives threaten to stall Ukraine's momentum. A Russian victory over Ukraine would significantly damage American security and prosperity, and enabling Ukraine's preservation of its homeland remains a moral imperative and squarely within our national interests.

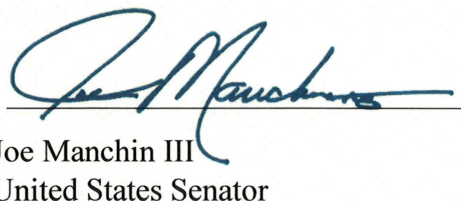
We anticipate your prompt action on this request and request timely responses to the following questions no later than November 30, 2022:

1. What operational advantages would a long-range, high-endurance armed UAS such as the MQ-1C Gray Eagle confer to Ukraine's armed forces, in addition to existing armed UAS systems?
2. According to reports, DOD identified risks of conflict escalation related to the MQ-1C Gray Eagle. What are the specific risks and how can they be mitigated?
3. According to reports, the Defense Technology Security Administration identified risks with the MQ-1C Gray Eagle related to sensitive technology transfer. Specifically, what are the risks and how can they be mitigated?
4. According to reports, defense officials identified concerns related to training timelines with the MQ-1C Gray Eagle. According to further reports, the manufacturer has offered to conduct training at no expense to the U.S. government and on condensed timelines. Did DOD consider this proposal and, if so, what was its determination?
5. According to reports, some Ukrainian operators identified concerns with MQ-1C Gray Eagle survivability against Russian air defenses. How did DOD evaluate the survivability of the platform, including in comparison to other armed UAS systems in the conflict?

Sincerely,



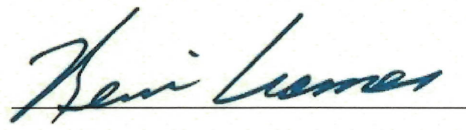
Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



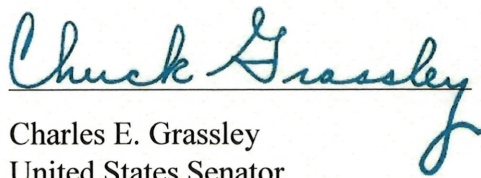
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



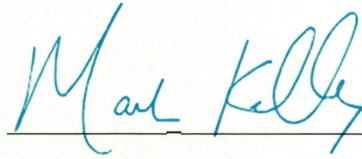
Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



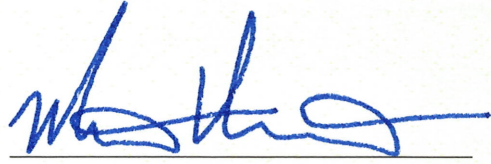
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



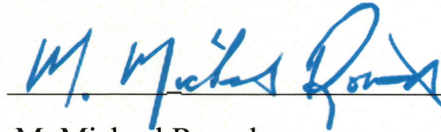
Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



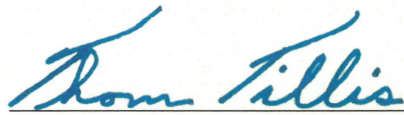
Mark Kelly
United States Senator



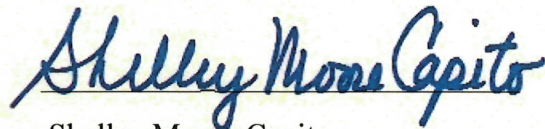
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



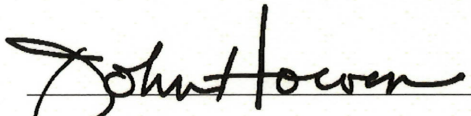
M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



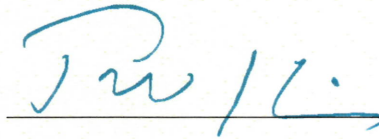
Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator