

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 20, 2013

The Honorable John M. McHugh
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-0101

Dear Secretary McHugh:

We are very concerned that the Department of the Army is not supporting the Army Network Modernization programs, specifically the Warfighter Information Network-Tactical (WIN-T) and the Handheld, Manpack, Small Form Fit (HMS) radio system. These essential programs were identified in the Army's fiscal year 2014 budget as its "foremost investment priority." We ask that you protect these programs from reductions in funding that would delay the deployment of these crucial assets to our soldiers in the field.

The Army has worked for almost a decade and taxpayers have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to develop this secure wireless network and non-proprietary waveform radio system. No matter how operationally challenging the communications infrastructure may be where our Army is deployed, our soldiers must be able to use modern communications applications that enable them to effectively communicate by voice, video, and data while on the move. This is a potential life-saving technology, and it is imperative to leverage our investment in it now.

Last year, due to Army contracting delays, funding for the WIN-T was reduced in the fiscal year 2013 Department of Defense Appropriations Act by \$381 million. Now, the Army has proposed to cut another \$128 million to the remaining fiscal year 2013 WIN-T funding in the upcoming Department of Defense prior approval reprogramming. This additional reduction, if approved by Congress, would cut the total planned fiscal year 2013 funding level for WIN-T by more than fifty-three percent – a total amount of \$509 million – compared to the Army's original fiscal year 2013 budget request.

If fiscal year 2013 funding for the WIN-T is cut by this devastating amount, the program would be forced to reduce the number of Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) that would receive this vital communications equipment from six BCTs to only four. Currently, the WIN-T is only deployed to three BCTs and two Division Headquarters units. To put this into perspective, the Army's objective is to field WIN-T to 31 BCTs and 9 Division command units. If the Army proceeds to delay the WIN-T on the timeline dictated by its proposed funding cuts, it will take nearly ten years to deploy this life-saving technology to the soldier in the field. We cannot wait nearly a decade longer to implement this technology throughout the Army. We ask that you defend your Army's number one funding priority and fight to sustain the funding for these programs in fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

The WIN-T's and the HMS radio's ability to communicate and maintain situational awareness – from the commanding officer to the individual soldier – is giving our men and women in uniform a capability as significant to their safety and combat effectiveness as the body armor and vehicles that protect them from IEDs. Deployment of this capability deserves the same sense of urgency. But that will only happen if the Army protects the WIN-T and the HMS funding from further reductions and gets the gear into the hands of soldiers who need and deserve it.


We understand that sequestration has created a difficult budget environment and that tough choices must be made. However, the Army stated that this program is its “highest priority,” therefore the Army should take all possible steps to protect the WIN-T and the HMS radios from funding reductions. During tough fiscal times we must sharpen our focus on our priorities, not subject them to devastating cuts that further delay production of crucial, life-saving equipment that must get into the hands of our soldiers.

We appreciate your attention to this issue and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
Senator



William M. Cowan
Senator