United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 5, 2010

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
119 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Cochran:

We are writing to urge the Committee to appropriate at least $75 million in fiscal year 2011 for the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI) within the Operations and Maintenance, Defense-wide account.

Congress and the Department of Defense (DOD) have recognized that accelerating development, population growth, and loss of habitat on non-military lands pose a serious threat to the sustainability of key military installations, ranges, and airspace, and accordingly to military readiness and to the development and fielding of future weapon systems. In 2002, Congress provided the Secretary of Defense and the Secretaries of the Military Departments authority in section 2684a of title 10, US Code, to partner with state and local governments and conservation organizations to identify and protect key areas necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of these vital installations, ranges, and airspace. The Secretary of Defense implemented this authority by establishing the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI).

The REPI program has already proven to be a great success. In fiscal years 2005 through 2009, DOD used REPI authority to provide over $130 million to support installation projects and leveraged in excess of $150 million in partner contributions. Congress and DOD provided an additional $54.7 million in FY 2010 to protect key installations, ranges, and airspace through REPI, and these funds are leveraging significant additional funding from partners. Since FY 2005, REPI-funded projects have been or are being implemented at more than 50 installations and ranges throughout the country. Additional projects are expected to be initiated in the next few months.

Recent DOD and RAND Corporation assessments have validated the effectiveness of REPI, but also indicate that the program needs additional resources to meet the challenges that encroachment is posing to military installations and ranges. The RAND report, entitled "The Thin Green Line," concluded that the REPI program is underfunded, that opportunities for effective action to protect bases are being lost, and that the cost of effective action will only increase over time. RAND recommended a funding level of approximately $150 million per year throughout the FYDP and beyond.

Over the last several years, Congress has taken steps to increase funding for REPI. We appreciate your leadership in helping increase FY 2010 funding for the program to $54.7 million, $18 million above the Pentagon's budget request, but still less than half of the Service-validated funding requirements. This year, the Administration has requested $40 million for REPI. We believe that this is far too low to effectively meet the very real threat encroachment poses to the long-term viability of military installations across the country and to the readiness and economic benefits provided by those installations.

These challenges will only intensify in the near to mid-term. The "Grow the Force" initiative, the global restationing of forces, implementation of BRAC 2005, fielding of new weapons systems, and the pressing need to retrain forces as they redeploy from Iraq and Afghanistan will all increase pressures on our remaining military installations and ranges. We must get ahead of these pressures if we are to preserve readiness over time.

In our view, REPI needs to be funded at a level of at least $75 million in FY 2010 if it is to continue to be successful in addressing encroachment, preserving the readiness of our Armed Forces, ensuring the long range sustainability of our installations, ranges, and airspace, and sustaining the vital contributions military installations make to our local, state, and regional economies. We respectfully encourage you to fund the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative at this level.

We understand that this will be a difficult budget year. However, the relatively modest investment in protecting our bases now under REPI is a highly cost-effective method of avoiding much higher expenditures in the outyears to attempt to overcome the impacts of encroachment if left unaddressed.

We certify that neither we nor our immediate family have a pecuniary interest, consistent with the requirements of paragraph 9 of Rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, in any congressionally-directed spending item that we requested.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of our request, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to support this important program.

Sincerely,

Senator Mark Udall

Senator Richard Burr

Senator Daniel Akaka

Senator Dianne Feinstein

Senator Barbara Boxer

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison

Senator James Inhofe

Senator Sam Brownback

Senator Tim Johnson

Senator Ben Cardin

Senator Kay Hagan

Senator Mark Begich

Senator Roland Burris

Senator Michael Bennet

Senator George LeMieux