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March 14, 2018

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-3010

Dear Mr. Secretary,

In December 2016, I requested through an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) a study on the effects of military helicopter noise on the National Capital Region communities, as well as recommendations for the reduction of this noise. This report was to be submitted to Congress within 90 days of the NDAA's passage, in March 2017.

This past February, I received the publication to Congress entitled, *Report on the Effects of Military Helicopter Noise on National Capital Region Communities and Individuals* (Report). Unfortunately, this Report failed to give anything resembling a robust study of the issue, nor does it offer any new or thoughtful recommendations for noise reduction.

Throughout this process, I have appreciated an ongoing dialogue with Major General Howard, Commanding General of the Military District of Washington, and appreciate his responsiveness and dedication to reducing helicopter noise in the National Capitol Region (NCR).

The Report, however, was delivered to Congress nearly an entire year past its deadline, and failed to study the effects of helicopter noise as directed by Congress. While the Report provides data listing various organizations flying helicopters in the NCR and myriad flight operation restrictions, the Department of Defense seemingly did not conduct any study on the effects of military helicopter noise in the region. The report mentioned an ongoing National Environmental Policy Act study at Davison Army Airfield, however Congress required a study of the entire NCR beyond what was already underway for a small section of the area. I appreciate the efforts by area operators to minimize helicopter noise as outlined in the Report to include "Fly Friendly" and the Air Installation Compatible Use Zones program. However, if current policies and procedures were satisfactory, the study would not have been needed.

The Report did provide two recommendations to mitigate helicopter noise — one to develop a noise inquiry website and another to establish a monthly noise abatement working group. While these recommendations are welcomed as a first step, they are insufficient as lone solutions to reduce helicopter noise to acceptable levels. The recommendations put the onus on local residents to fix a problem that the military created. While well intentioned and perhaps moderately useful for reporting incidents of noise, the Federal Aviation Administration's Noise

Complaint Initiative, on which the Report models a helicopter version, has not resulted in reducing fixed wing aircraft noise in any meaningful way. Further, my concern with relying on a working group to help mitigate the problem stems from experience of a similar group to address fixed wing noise at National Airport. That working group has had little to no success reducing aircraft noise in a timely way.

I appreciate your attention to this matter, and stand ready to continue conversations about actionable solutions to reduce helicopter noise in the NCR.

Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer Jr.