

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 30, 2012

The Honorable John McHugh
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

General Raymond T. Odierno
Chief of Staff of the United States Army
200 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Secretary McHugh and General Odierno:

As members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation, we seek clarification regarding ongoing command transitions at Natick Soldier Systems Center ("Natick Labs"). Natick Labs is the epicenter for developing equipment, technology, and life-saving gear for our Armed Forces. It embodies the Army's goals of force transformation and improved joint capabilities. Accordingly, any change in the leadership structure at Natick should be thoroughly and carefully evaluated.

As you know, on August 22, 2012, the Army announced in a press release the nomination of Brigadier General Daniel Hughes to succeed Brigadier General John McGuinness as the dual-hatted Senior Commander of Natick Labs and Deputy Commanding General of Army RDECOM. In September, after General McGuinness had been reassigned to his new post, Dr. John Obusek was named Interim Senior Manager at Natick. Following Dr. Obusek's appointment, it came to our attention that the Army plans to terminate the General Officer billet at Natick Labs, reverting to civilian leadership at the Labs on a permanent, rather than interim, basis. Over the years, we have worked collaboratively with Dr. Obusek, and his abilities, professionalism and commitment to Natick's mission are beyond question. Dr. Obusek is a vital asset to the Senior Executive Service and to the men and women in the military who continue to benefit from the state-of-the-art soldier systems that are developed at Natick. Nevertheless, the conflicting reports about the Army's leadership plans at Natick Labs require clarification.

Natick Labs is New England's only active duty Army installation, and it provides an array of essential life-saving capabilities to our men and women in uniform.

We acknowledge and support the Department of Defense's need to reorganize, modernize, and restructure the military to meet new threats and economic realities. However, in a time when many significant cuts to defense spending are being implemented as part of our broader efforts to

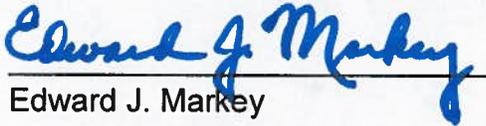
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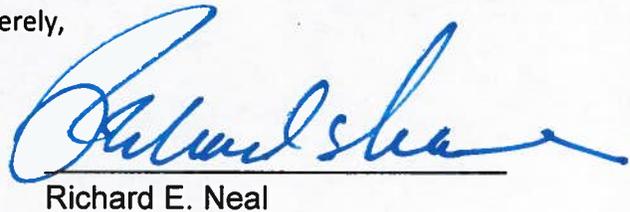
reduce our deficit and draw down our forces from Afghanistan, both the Department of Defense and Congress continue to recognize and emphasize the essential contributions of Natick Labs to our Armed Services. For example, in the House-passed FY 2013 defense authorization (NDAA) and appropriations bills, Congress matched the President's request and more than tripled body armor research and development funding from last year's enacted levels, a core mission performed at Natick. In compliance with language included in the House-passed FY 2013 NDAA, Natick is also leading the way in developing an Improved Outer Tactical Vest (IOTV) better suited for female service members. The new IOTVs enable female service members to participate in more combat missions than ever before.

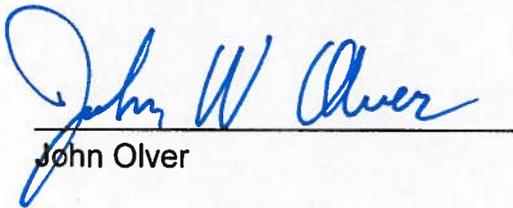
Given these developments, and the essential role Natick Soldier Systems continues to play in protecting and equipping our service members, we request a written response detailing the Army's plans for Natick Labs.

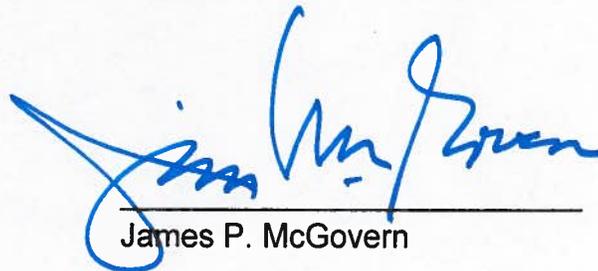
Thank you for your continued leadership and service.

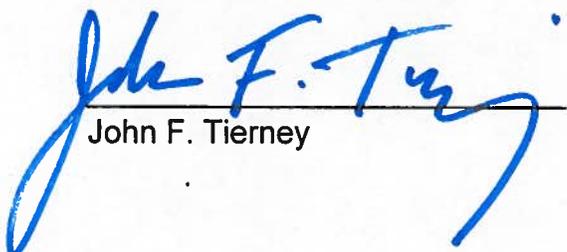
Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey


Richard E. Neal

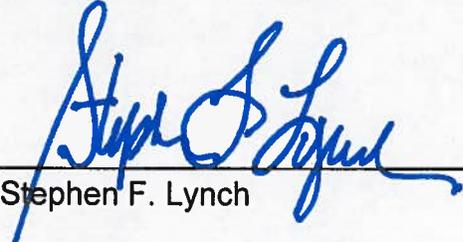

John Olver


James P. McGovern

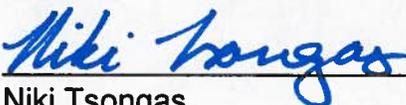

John F. Tierney


Michael E. Capuano

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Stephen F. Lynch



Niki Tsongas



William Keating