

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3302

December 8, 2015

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter,

Leading up to Operation Toy Drop, an Air Force Reserve Command spokesman relayed that this training mission would demonstrate how outside aircraft and crews would be able to fulfill all of the training requirements for paratroopers at Fort Bragg. This training mission has proven that the 440th Airlift Wing (AW) is clearly an invaluable asset to Fort Bragg's paratroopers and vital to maintaining the highest levels of readiness for our nation's rapid response forces.

While the 440th AW was asked to stay in the background by Air Force Reserve Command for Operation Toy Drop— which is an exercise they have traditionally lead – the 440th AW again proved to be indispensable in the success of this mission. The 440th AW provided mission coordination with Fort Bragg units and local agencies, flight products and briefings to all participating crews, flight and ground leadership, logistical support and ramp coordination. They even provided maintenance to a visiting unit's aircraft that would have had to, otherwise, cancel their mission.

In addition to playing a part in seemingly every facet of this mission, the 440th AW provided a substantial portion of airlift over the course of Operation Toy Drop. The 440th AW provided 43.2 percent of all airlifts and supported 40.1 percent of all jumps for Operation Toy Drop. In addition to their high level of participation required for a successful mission, they also proved instrumental when they supplied maintenance to visiting aircraft. Without question, these aircraft would not have been able to fulfill their airlift responsibilities during Operation Toy Drop if it wasn't for the 440th AW.

As you are well aware, operations as complex as this require a level of joint cooperation that is generated and sustained through daily interaction among units working closely together on a consistent basis. It is troubling that the Air Force continues to double down on their belief that outside aircraft and crew can support Fort Bragg's training needs when Operation Toy Drop seems to have proven otherwise.

I have continuously stated my strong opposition to deactivating such a necessary component to the daily training of Fort Bragg's paratroopers and special operation units. I now feel as though my concerns have been validated, as evident by the high level of participation required of the

440th AW in this training mission. I believe this proves, without a doubt, that mission success at Fort Bragg requires a local flying unit like the 440th AW.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Renee Ellmers", written over a horizontal line.

Renee Ellmers

Member of Congress