

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2012

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to express our concern over the future of the U.S. combat vehicle industrial base.

The Defense Strategic Guidance you unveiled in January calls for significant reductions in the armed forces, especially in the Army and Marine Corps, as well as sacrifices in investment programs. Regarding the U.S. industrial base, the guidance calls for protecting critical industries as the nation adapts to the new defense posture. You and your leadership team have referenced tactical aviation and shipbuilding as just two industries that require continuous national support to remain viable.

However, the strategy neglects the U.S. combat vehicle industrial base. The combat vehicle industrial base is a unique asset that consists of hundreds of public and private facilities across the United States. Despite this, the FY 2013 President's Budget request proposes to terminate U.S. tank production for the first time since before World War II.

The Army specifically proposes to shut down the tank industrial base and then reconstitute it in 2017 to produce further upgrades to the M1 Abrams tank as well as the new Ground Combat Vehicle. While international sales opportunities for Abrams appear stronger than prior years, they are inadequate to sustain the industrial base and in some cases uncertain. In light of this, modest and continued Abrams production for the Army is necessary to preserve the industrial base.

Another important tenet of the Defense Strategic Guidance notes that because the future Army and Marine Corps will be smaller and leaner, they must retain the quality and capability that will allow them to fight and win on future battlefields. Indeed, to quote Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, "capability is more important than size." We agree. To that end, we support the continued production of the M1A2 SEP tank, which is the world's most capable tank featuring survivability and seamless connection to the digital network and of far higher quality than the older M1A1 Abrams tank.

The debate over the fate of the U.S. combat vehicle industrial base is not new. The Congress in bipartisan fashion supported additional tank upgrades in the FY 2012 Defense Authorization and Appropriations Acts to forestall shutdown of the industrial



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base into 2014. Despite this support and the emphasis on maintaining the health of the industrial base in the Strategic Guidance, the Army continues to stand by its decision to shutter U.S. tank production.

We ask that you work with the Congress to sustain U.S. tank production in the FY 2013 budget. Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to this nation.

Sincerely,

Sandy Levin

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Candice S. Miller

Marcy Kaptur

Jim Sewell

Jim Jordan

Michael R. Turner

T. Huelskamp

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John Dingell

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Midland

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