



September 19, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We would like to express our strong support for the **DoD Future Vertical Lift (FVL) Strategic Plan**, currently being staffed in DoD per the direction of then-Secretary Gates as a logical outcome of Section 255 of the 2009 Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This Strategic Plan outlines a Joint approach for the future development of vertical lift aircraft for all military Services.

The US vertical lift industry, at the behest of the US Government, self-formed a Vertical Lift Consortium (VLC) of over ninety companies, from OEMs to non-traditional enterprises, so it could present a unified voice when working with the government. The VLC participated in the development of the **FVL Strategic Plan** through reviews, comments and submission of relevant information. VLC representatives have played an integral role in informing the US Government experts developing the strategy, and are members of the FVL Executive Steering Group. The VLC and the American Helicopter Society (AHS) strongly endorse the **FVL Strategic Plan**.

Current conflicts clearly demonstrate the essential role of vertical lift aircraft across the range of military operations. But the extraordinary OPTEMPO and extreme operating environments were not envisioned when today's vertical lift aircraft were conceived. With the exception of the V-22 Osprey, the "A"-models of all currently deployed rotorcraft were originally designed during the Vietnam War. Over the past 10 years, we have lost nearly 600 Americans and over 400 vertical lift aircraft to hostile action and mishaps. DoD's 2009 **Study on Rotorcraft Survivability** pointed out that over 80% of losses were due to non-hostile events, including controlled flight into terrain (CFIT), brownout, object/wire strike and engine failure – events that more advanced technologies could have prevented. These statistics are much higher than they should be and represent, in part, the relatively low level of DoD investments in advanced rotorcraft technologies over the past 25 years.

The **FVL Strategic Plan** shows that there is a clear need for new and innovative vertical lift aircraft with greater range, speed, payload and high altitude performance, with improved safety and reliability, greater situational awareness, better survivability, and a smaller logistics footprint. The current fleet's performance shortfalls cannot be addressed through incremental upgrades. New capabilities, which can only be realized with advanced technology platforms, are necessary. There has been and continues to be a lack of sufficient DoD funding for development of next generation technologies and capabilities. Industry is poised to invest in future rotorcraft technology but needs the direction and Government funding of the **FVL Strategic Plan**.

The **FVL Strategic Plan** offers an integrated process of requirements development, technology development and maturation, leading to acquisition. This plan sets the strategic course for the next 25-40 years. When signed and implemented, industry will have a clear roadmap of DoD's intent for development of future vertical lift aircraft. This will enable industry to align Independent Research and Development (IRAD) budgets with the goals and timelines set forth. We urge the Department of Defense to approve and fully resource the execution and required management activities outlined in the **FVL Strategic Plan**.

Very Respectfully,



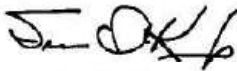
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AgustaWestland North America



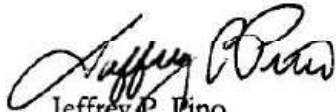
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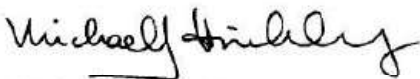
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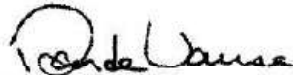
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