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ON INTELLIGENCE

July 26, 2012

Hon. Leon Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Panetta,

I would like to draw your attention to a critical logistics issue that will have a detrimental effect on military readiness. As you already know, every one of our modern defense platforms requires significant power to operate. One of our nation's great challenges is to develop and utilize a new generation of battery systems that will maximize these platforms' capabilities while they're deployed. Unfortunately I'm concerned that the U.S. Army is about to make a decision that will reduce the effectiveness of the battery systems we have today.

One of the most cutting edge developers of batteries is EnerSys Energy Products, an advanced battery manufacturer located in Missouri, which has supported the Warfighter with high quality products for many years. EnerSys' batteries support defense platforms in all service branches. They are in over 65% of the Army's ground combat vehicles. While lesser quality batteries exist and may even have value in some of our assets, it's critically important that we recognize the difference between the highest quality and inferior batteries.

Recent U.S. Army tests have deemed the EnerSys battery and a lesser quality battery produced by Exile Technologies to be equivalent and interchangeable, and plans to buy them both under the same National Stock Number (NSN). Unfortunately, independent tests have shown that the two batteries have different chemistries and produce different electrical performance. When mixed in the same vehicle, the combined performance of the batteries is degraded, and the potential for catastrophic failure increases. The practice of mixing batteries of different chemistries is not considered a best practice in industrial applications, and other services do not mix batteries on aviation and maritime platforms. The U.S. Navy, for example, recently decided against mixing batteries on submarines due to safety and operational concerns.

Few assets are more important to our Warfighters than tactical vehicles, and I fully support the Army's effort to sustain the ability of these vehicles to operate in austere and demanding environments. Current military specifications for batteries, however, were written 20 years ago. The use of multiple (tandem) batteries was not considered when those specifications were written. I firmly believe the practical application of combining batteries of mixed chemistries must be further evaluated, and a common standard established for defense procurements. Joint operational applications require common standards.



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I am deeply concerned that the Department of Defense (DOD) is not applying the same operational and safety considerations to ground tactical vehicles that they do to other military platforms. I have been in touch with the Army and remain concerned that Army officials do not grasp the seriousness of the problem I just described. I respectfully request that the DOD conduct a comprehensive analysis of mixing batteries of different chemistries, and establish a department-wide standard based on that analysis. In the meantime, I ask the DOD to halt any request for proposal that would introduce a new battery into the supply system without the proper procurement systems in place.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you or your staff have questions, please feel free to contact myself or MAJ Mark O'Neill, who is currently on assignment to my staff, at (202) 224-5721.

Sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roy Blunt", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.

Senator Roy Blunt