

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 23, 2010

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

We write today to express serious concern over the failure of the Department of Defense (DoD) to submit the 2010 Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which is mandated by law under the Fiscal Year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act (section 1202). DoD's annual Chinese military power report is required to be delivered to Congress no later than March 1 of each year, in order to inform Congress on the true nature and extent of China's rapidly growing military capabilities and military strategies, as Congress prepares to consider the annual defense authorization bill, defense appropriations bill, and related legislation.

With the Chinese military power report now almost five months overdue, we ask that you submit it to Congress immediately and provide an explanation as to the significant delay. It is our understanding that a draft of the report was completed within the DoD several months ago. If true, the lengthy delay is puzzling. Since the responsibility for this report lies with the DoD alone, we ask for your assurance that White House political appointees at the National Security Council or other agencies have not been allowed to alter the substance of the report in an effort to avoid the prospect of angering China. The annual report is designed to provide Congress with a candid, objective assessment of the facts. Anything less would risk undermining its very credibility.

China's extensive military build-up is alarming, as are its potential implications for U.S. national security. The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has undertaken a military modernization program, supported by a military budget that has experienced double-digit-percentage annual increases for more than two decades.

According to DoD's 2009 Chinese military power report, "China has the most active land-based ballistic and cruise missile program in the world. It is developing and testing offensive missiles, forming additional missile units, qualitatively upgrading certain missile systems, and developing methods to counter ballistic missile defenses." China is developing an anti-ship ballistic missile as part of its anti-access strategy that "is intended to provide the PLA the capability to attack ships at sea, including aircraft carriers in the western Pacific Ocean." It is also developing a new submarine-launched ballistic missile that "would provide China its first credible sea-based nuclear strike capability." Furthermore, China recently put two new Shang-class nuclear-powered submarines and a unit of Song-class diesel-electric attack submarines into service. The 2009 DoD report additionally states that "China remains interested in procuring Su-33 carrier-borne fighters from Russia."

The Honorable Robert Gates

July 23, 2010

Page 2

As noted in a 2010 paper by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (“AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept”), China “appears to be purposefully developing and fielding offensive military capabilities that challenge U.S. freedom of action in all domains – space, cyberspace, at sea and in the air. Chinese military writings strongly support this proposition” DoD’s 2009 report also highlights China’s willingness to use military force to take Taiwan. The DoD report further acknowledges that the PLA “is also developing longer range capabilities that have implications beyond Taiwan,” which “could allow China to project power to ensure access to resources or enforce claims to disputed regions.”

Admiral Robert F. Willard, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, has made clear his own concerns about China’s accelerated military growth. Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 26, 2010, Admiral Willard stated, “China’s interest in a peaceful and stable environment that will support the country’s developmental goals is difficult to reconcile with the evolving military capabilities that appear designed to challenge U.S. freedom of action in the region or exercise aggression or coercion of its neighbors, including U.S. treaty allies and partners.”

With these concerns in mind, we request that you submit the 2010 Report on the Military Power of the People’s Republic of China to Congress as quickly as possible. Continued delay would further hinder Congress’ ability to fully and accurately understand the potential threat that China’s rapidly expanding military poses to U.S. national security. Thank you for your faithful service to our nation, your dedication to our men and women in uniform, and your steadfast commitment to our national defense.

Sincerely,










