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United States Senate

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June 21, 2016

General Lori Robinson
Commander
U.S. Northern Command
250 Vandenberg, Suite B016
Peterson AFB, CO 80914

Dear General Robinson:

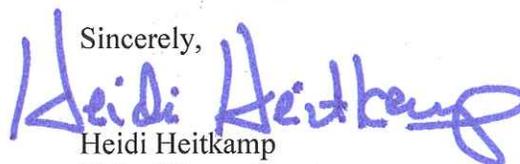
Thank you for our phone call on June 15. I thoroughly enjoyed our discussion, and it was a pleasure for me to welcome you to your new position. As the first female combatant commander in U.S. history, you have achieved an important milestone in the history of our military and are an inspiration to women everywhere. You are also responsible for an incredibly important area, and I look forward to working with you, particularly on priorities related to homeland defense and Arctic security. I believe your work in these areas would be well-served by a visit to Grand Forks Air Force Base, and I hope you will have an opportunity to accept my invitation to join me at the base in the near future.

As the United States becomes more engaged in the Arctic region, there is an opportunity for U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) to meet its intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) requirements by leveraging the considerable assets at Grand Forks Air Force Base, including the RQ-4 Global Hawk aircraft. The base has also established strong partnerships with the community, University of North Dakota, Northern Plains Unmanned Aircraft Systems Test Site, private industry and interagency partners, creating an environment of cooperation that will unlock great potential for the U.S. military, particularly in the areas of ISR and meeting training needs in the rapidly expanding remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) career field. That environment is perfect for emerging Arctic missions, and I welcome the opportunity to show you the capabilities.

I also strongly encourage both NORTHCOM and the North American Aerospace Defense Command to look to Grand Forks as an opportunity for expanding international, inter-service, and interagency partnerships. The high-quality infrastructure at Grand Forks Air Force Base would be perfect for enhancing security cooperation with our Canadian allies on Arctic missions or expanding the role of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which already maintains a robust operation in Grand Forks. The emerging RPA mission training opportunities that will be available at the Grand Sky Business & Aviation Park offer particularly exciting potential both for the U.S. military as well as foreign partners.

As the United States continues its work with Canada and other allies to address issues in the Arctic region, Grand Forks Air Force Base stands ready to assist. I look forward to speaking with you further to discuss NORTHCOM's Arctic strategy and hope you will be able to join me on a visit to Grand Forks.

Sincerely,



Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senate

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