

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 26, 2017

The Honorable Avigdor Lieberman
Minister of Defense
Israel Ministry of Defense
Hakirya 61909 Tel Aviv
Israel

Dear Minister Lieberman:

We write in support of Israel's plan to modernize its military over the coming decade, buttressed by the renewed and strengthened Memorandum of Understanding between our two countries that will provide Israel \$38 billion in military aid from fiscal years 2019 through 2028. The United States and Israel have an exceptional history of friendship and cooperation, and we seek to continue to bolster this bond by ensuring that Israel continues to procure the best military equipment.

We understand that Israel intends to modernize its heavy-lift helicopter fleet by procuring new rotary-wing aircraft. As you review options, we strongly encourage you to consider the CH-53K King Stallion – the latest successor to the CH-53 Yas'ur that the Israeli Air Force has been operating since the late 1960s with upgrades and improvements made along the way to extend service life. The CH-53 Yas'ur fleet has performed successfully for decades and procuring the latest model of this aircraft would enhance Israel's heavy lift and air mobility capabilities even further.

Investing in the CH-53K would strengthen Israel's qualitative military edge, which is central to our bilateral security cooperation relationship. Just this month, the CH-53K reached Milestone C, which marks the official transition from the research and development to production phase. As the world's leading heavy-lift helicopter, the CH-53K provides significant improvements – including capability, maintainability, interoperability, survivability, reliability, and cost of ownership compared to predecessor aircraft.

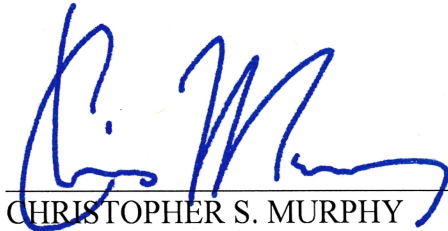
As the most powerful U.S. helicopter, the U.S. Marine Corps will rely on the CH-53K to complete an array of missions on land and at sea for decades to come, as they have done successfully with CH-53 predecessors for over half a century. The strong track record of CH-53 predecessor aircraft for both our countries make us confident that the CH-53K will meet Israel's rotary requirements for rescue operations, transport missions, and tactical troop lifts.

As our strongest ally in an unpredictable region, Israel stands to strengthen our strategic partnership with the continued use of common airframes. We thank you for your consideration of this premier aircraft and look forward to continuing to ensure that Israel remains a secure and stable state with the support of the finest defense systems available.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



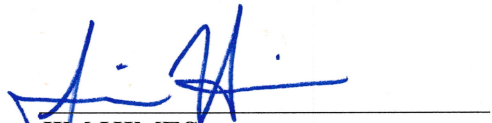
CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



SUSAN M. COLLINS
United States Senate



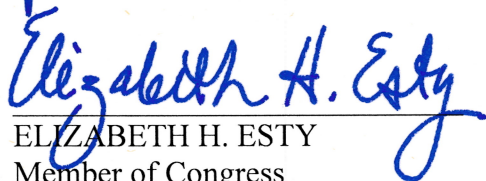
ROSA L. DELAURO
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