

# United States Senate

October 16, 2019

The Honorable Barbara Barrett  
Secretary of the Air Force  
1670 Air Force, Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Barrett:

Congratulations on your confirmation as the 25th Secretary of the United States Air Force. You are taking the helm of one of our nation's most important military institutions at a critical time, and I look forward to working closely with you on behalf of the men and women in uniform in Montana and those deployed around the world. To that end, I invite you to visit Malmstrom Air Force Base and the Montana Air National Guard's 120th Airlift Wing in Great Falls, and to meet personally with some of the men and women who work tirelessly to keep our nation secure.

At Malmstrom, I encourage you to tour the missile fields to get a firsthand perspective of the base's aging infrastructure needs as the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent Program moves forward. We must continue to take critical steps to invest in and advance Minuteman modernization efforts. But I believe we must also make appropriate infrastructure investments to ensure our men and women in uniform can properly carry out their missions, and that bolster the quality of life for them and their families. Specifically, I am hopeful that you engage directly in efforts to address the housing challenges for service members at Malmstrom. As the Air Force shifts the Security Forces and Engineer career fields towards rotational assignments, it will become even more difficult for the community to provide housing options, as it struggles with a housing shortage of its own. Base leadership has done a great job of ensuring they are utilizing every available option to house Airmen, but your direct engagement could provide much-needed assistance.

Additionally, I would ask that you visit with the 219th and 819th REDHORSE units at Malmstrom. These associated units – representing both the active duty Air Force and Air National Guard – continue to play a critical role in our nation's contingency operations abroad. Despite having roughly half of the manpower as any other REDHORSE squadron, deployment tempos are as high as they have ever been and the units are deploying to the Middle East, Africa, and the southern border on a nearly constant basis. As the Air Force reviews its Agile Combat Support career fields as part of the Air Force We Need initiative, I would ask that the service consider providing additional manning for RED HORSE units in Montana and around the globe.

While at the 120th, I encourage you to take a close look at the Montana Air National Guard's fleet of C-130Hs. These aging aircraft, many of which are currently deployed overseas, are in critical need of additional upgrades to prolong their lifespan and to ensure that they can carry out their missions safely and effectively. For decades, the men and women of the 120th have performed their mission with distinction, and it is imperative they are provided the very best equipment and aircraft to do their jobs.

Secretary Barrett, thank you for your continued service to this nation. I have no doubt that you will serve with distinction and with the best interests of the Air Force and our Nation at the forefront of your mind. I stand ready to assist in any way I can, and I look forward to hosting you in Montana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jon Tester