

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 8, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State-designate
c/o Presidential Transition Team
Washington, D.C. 20270

Dear Secretary of State-designate Clinton:

We are writing to encourage you, upon confirmation, to preserve the State Department's newly created Special Envoy for MANPADS Threat Reduction position.

As you may know, this post was created less than a year ago to lead the interagency effort to protect global aviation from the threat of Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS), or shoulder-fired missiles. As evidenced by hearings and briefings held by our Subcommittee, the threat to civil and military aviation from such weapons is quite serious. These weapons have proliferated throughout the world and can be purchased on the black market at very low cost. More than two-dozen terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, are believed to possess these weapons, which are easy to transport and use. A successful attack against a civilian airliner from a shoulder-fired missile would have devastating human, economic and strategic consequences.

The MANPADS threat came into sharp focus following the failed shoulder-fired missile attack against an Israeli airliner in Mombasa, Kenya, in 2002. Given the threat, we have led efforts in the House to secure and destroy shoulder-fired missiles around the world that are vulnerable to theft, loss or diversion, and hold accountable those governments that deliberately provide MANPADS to terrorists. Such proactive efforts have produced results. According to the State Department, over 26,000 excess, loosely secured, illicitly held, or otherwise at-risk MANPADS have been destroyed with U.S. assistance since 2003.

The Special Envoy is uniquely positioned to call attention to the MANPADS menace, engage foreign governments at a high level on issues related to the proliferation and control of MANPADS, and improve coordination amongst the various U.S. government agencies that engage in counter-MANPADS efforts. For these reasons, we ask that you retain the Special Envoy position. We also ask that you review funding and staffing levels to ensure that the Special Envoy is able to respond quickly and decisively to emerging threats while pursuing longer-term initiatives.

We look forward to working with you on this and other critically important national security issues.

Sincerely,



BRAD SHERMAN
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade



EDWARD R. ROYCE
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade