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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

April 28, 2008

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1155

Dear Secretary Gates,

I am profoundly disturbed by yesterday's low-altitude flight of Air Force One and F-16 fighters over lower Manhattan. From press reports, I understand that Air Force One's flight mission here, carried out by the Department of Defense, was to fly that aircraft—a Boeing 747, equipped with state-of-the-art command, control and communications equipment—at about 1,500 feet above lower Manhattan to provide a “photo opportunity” for the jet.

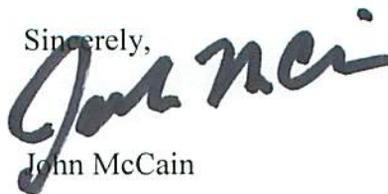
Against the backdrop of September 11, the disruption and foreseeable injury to persons and property arising from any ensuing panic and confusion caused (or that could have been caused) by the supposed mission is absolutely unacceptable. In that context, the recent apology of White House Military Office (WHMO) Director and his assumption of responsibility rings hollow. The supposed mission represents a fundamentally unsound exercise in military judgment and may have constituted an inappropriate use of Department of Defense resources.

In furtherance of the Committee's oversight of Department of Defense resources and operations, I respectfully ask that you provide the following information:

- 1) A description of exactly what the mission of the flyover was and who ultimately approved that mission.
- 2) An estimate of the total cost associated with planning and executing that mission.

Please provide this information by Monday, May 4, 2009. If you have any questions, please contact Joe Bowab, at (202) 224-4928.

Sincerely,



John McCain

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

REVISIONS

DATE

APPROVED BY

SIGNATURE

1. PURPOSE

2. SCOPE

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

4. PROCEDURE

5. REFERENCES

6. APPENDICES

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