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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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August 23, 2023

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

I am contacting you today to request officially that you investigate the actions of the Department of Defense (DoD) regarding the basing process for U.S. Space Command permanent headquarters since the completion of your work that was publicly released in June 2022 as GAO-22-106055.¹ As you are aware, there have been concerns raised that untoward political interference played a major role in the selection of Colorado Springs by President Biden.

National security decisions of this magnitude and significant economic interest require the process to be standardized, repeatable, transparent, and deliberate. Based on numerous administration officials talking to the press, the decision by President Biden appears to be anything but. Preferential decision-making by the President because of certain state laws has widely been publicized as a major factor but was never included in the basing requirements.²

I respectfully request GAO get to the bottom of this potentially political process that appears, in the final analysis, anything but standardized, repeatable, transparent, and deliberate. Please expeditiously report on outstanding questions that inform the public trust during processes as important as headquarters basing decisions for combatant commands.

We ask that your report, at a minimum, answer the following questions:

¹ GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, GAO-22-106055, *U.S. Space Command, Air Force Should Develop Guidance for Strengthening Future Basing Decisions*, June 2022.

² Natasha Bertrand, Haley Britzky and Oren Lieberman, *Biden to keep US Space Command in Colorado, reversing Trump decision*, CNN, July 31, 2023.

- 1) What were the requirements used during the initial selection process for USSPACECOM headquarters?
- 2) Did those requirements change during the selection process, whether prior to GAO's previous work or afterwards?
 - a. If they changed, what were the new factors?
 - b. How did they differ from original requirements?
 - c. Who in DoD leadership directed those changes, or were these changes directed from elsewhere in the Administration?

Additionally, because reporting indicates the Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin presented final options to the President:

- 3) How did the previously publicly attested process that assigned the Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall as the deciding government official alter at the last minute?
- 4) Why wasn't Secretary Kendall's decision the final decision, as Secretary Kendall had publicly said was his to make?³
- 5) Did Secretary Austin remove this decision from Secretary Kendall, or was the decision unilaterally removed from Secretary Kendall by the White House?
- 6) In what ways was General Dickinson, SPACECOM Commander, involved in the decision process?
- 7) Are there emails, briefing material, or other documentation that shows how the basing process was altered, who altered it, and how the final decision was eventually made that GAO can evaluate in its reporting?

Long-term, permanent basing decisions should stand up to scrutiny and not be politically motivated based on social policy preferences or based on advocacy by Administration officials. Instead, such a process should remain analytical and focused on clearly announced criteria and requirements that can be publicly scrutinized. Anything but a transparent process played out in the final decision for USSPACECOM headquarters under this Administration. The public deserves an independent review to understand how this basing process went awry and failed to follow transparent and repeatable steps which would have garnered trust in the final basing decision for USSPACECOM headquarters.

³ Theresa Hitchens, *'No indication' Biden will flip SPACECOM HQ to Colorado: Kendall*, BREAKING DEFENSE, Mar. 28, 2023 ("I have no indication that the President's going to do anything with regard to that decision," Kendall responded to a grilling by Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Ala., during a House defense appropriations subcommittee hearing. "Secretary [of Defense Lloyd] Austin delegated it to me, and that's where it stays today.")

If you have any questions, please contact the House Committee on Armed Services.
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee