Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2014

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. President:

In response to the unfolding Ebola outbreak, alongside a growing number of lawmakers, we continue to believe that travel restrictions are warranted for certain West African nations most directly affected by the Ebola virus. Some have objected to such an idea on the basis it would prevent the movement of supplies and personnel needed to contain the disease within West Africa. We believe that this is not necessarily true.

We write to highlight the aviation capabilities that presently exist through the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) and its participating carriers. This program, managed by both the Departments of Defense and Transportation, allows for the movement of individuals and supplies to almost any region of the world. If the program's "expansion flying" option is utilized to assist in ferrying relief supplies and personnel to the region (even if a travel ban or restrictions were imposed as we have called for), CRAF carriers could replace, or even expand, payload capacity that has exited the market as foreign commercial airlines have reduced services to the region since the beginning of the crisis. The utilization of CRAF carriers would also be entirely consistent with your decision to deploy U.S. military personnel to West Africa, as the containment of Ebola and the humanitarian crisis are together a top national security priority. For example, CRAF carriers could provide the long-haul capability from the United States to staging areas just outside the affected countries, preserving military resources for the final leg of such flights. Our understanding is that CRAF carriers have played a similar role in numerous cases, including the humanitarian response to the earthquake and tsunami in Fukushima, Japan; Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines; the Haitian earthquake; and the Rwandan genocide.

We further urge you to consider seeking participation from CRAF carriers, including reimbursable agreements with any and all qualified aid organizations involved in treating or containing this deadly disease in West Africa. As this crisis continues, it is imperative that all measures to protect Americans from further exposure to the disease be fully considered. At the same time, all available means to increase the level of aid to West Africa without unduly increasing the American public's risk of exposure should be vigorously pursued. CRAF carriers constitute a unique U.S. asset that has the potential to play a vital role in ending this crisis and protecting our public health and national security.

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We therefore urge you to seek participation from CRAF carriers to explore options for utilizing available assets to aid in the humanitarian response to the growing Ebola outbreak.

Sincerely,

JOHN THUNE
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

BILL SHUSTER
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure