

April 21, 2015

1250 I Street NW  
Washington, DC 20005

The Honorable Lamar Smith  
The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
2321 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson:

The American military is the greatest fighting force the world has ever seen. The United States Congress has the critical responsibility of empowering our military leaders by equipping that force with the tools they need to engage effectively in a world of ever-increasing security threats. Accordingly, we urge you to withdraw the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015, which would bar the Department of Energy from continuing a four-year collaboration with the Departments of Defense and Agriculture to develop cost-effective advanced biofuels.

Time and again throughout our history, the military has chosen to innovate towards new solutions. While the advances resulting from these efforts have often benefited our nation as a whole, they are undertaken not for the sake of novelty or adventure but to fill a key operational or tactical need. Advanced biofuels fills such a need: Reducing the dangerous dependence of the U.S. military on fossil fuels.

The Department of Defense is the world's largest institutional consumer of fuel. With approximately \$15 billion per year budgeted simply to maintain freedom of movement, the U.S. military is dangerously sensitive to the volatility of oil prices; a \$10 change in the price per barrel of crude oil leaves the Department of Defense with a \$1.3 billion shortfall and sees increased profits to countries who oppose our interests around the world. And because oil is priced in a global market, no amount of domestic production can insulate the military from these effects.

We have learned firsthand that oil truly is the Achilles' heel of our military. With most of the world's oil traveling through two or three major chokepoints, the military must allocate significant manpower and resources to keeping those sea lanes open and secure. Moreover, as the military transitions from large-scale land engagements in the Middle East and towards a broader engagement in the Asia-Pacific, the costs and logistical challenges associated with moving fuel over thousands of miles of ocean will only increase.

The threat of oil dependence along with the need for energy security isn't going away any time soon. And we shouldn't impede progress of alternatives that are moving forward now. Four years of partnership between the Departments of

Defense, Energy, and Agriculture have seen impressive progress in the development of advanced, “drop in” biofuels that will allow the military to turn away from an outdated fuel source. Top line military platforms as diverse as the super-sonic F/A-18 “Green Hornet,” the Air Force’s F16 fighter jets, the MH-60S Seahawk helicopter, the AV-8B Harrier, the Fire Scout unmanned vehicle, the Riverine Command Boat (RCB-X) and the frigate USS Ford have all operated at full capacity and with no adverse side effects using American-made biofuels.

Members of the military from every rank and service have spoken out in favor of the continued investment in biofuels for reasons of cost and capabilities alike. These voices, rather than political leanings or parochial interests, must steer national security policy. Accordingly, we urge you to withdraw the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015 and to ensure that the U.S. military is free to pursue the fuel sources its leaders deign necessary for maximum operational and tactical success.

Respectfully,

**Michael Breen**

Executive Director, Truman National Security Project  
Army Captain (Fmr.)

**RADM Leendert “Len” Hering**

USN (Ret.)

**Lt Gen Norman Seip**

USAF (Ret.)