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J. Randy Forbes
United States Congress
4th District, Virginia

May 3, 2011

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The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
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Dear Secretary Gates:

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Readiness of the House Armed Services Committee, charged with providing oversight of the Department of Defense, and as founder and co-Chair of the Congressional China Caucus, I am concerned with the Department of Defense's continued disregard for the legal submittal deadline for the required Annual Report to Congress on the Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China. Pursuant to Section 1202 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, you shall submit not later than March 1 each year, a report on the current and future military strategy of the People's Republic of China. To date, no such report has been submitted to the specified congressional committees for the Fiscal Year 2011.

Last year, this report was submitted to Congress six months after its required legal deadline, a deadline that was set so as to provide vital information on China's intentions and capabilities to Congress as it begins the national defense authorization process each spring. This year, once again, Congress is beginning its discussion of the National Defense Authorization Act without this tool to understand the Department of Defense's perspective on China.

Since the delayed submission of last year's report, China has made considerable advancements in military capability. In late 2010, China began the process of deploying an anti-ship ballistic missile, the DF-21D, capable of targeting U.S. aircraft carriers within one thousand miles of the Chinese coast. The DF-21D event was followed by the January test of China's J-20, the nation's first stealth jet-fighter. Then, in March and April we learned that China has neared completion of its first aircraft carrier and is developing the new J-15 jet-fighter, designed for carrier deployment. Considered separately, each of these advancements has enormous implications for U.S. military planning. In the aggregate, they mark an unprecedented era of Chinese military modernization. Yet Congress is left without guidance from the Department of Defense on such advancements as it considers the preparedness of our forces to respond.

Since this report was first produced in 2002, it has been routinely submitted to Congress months after the legal deadline. The most recent precedent set by last year's delay of six months is unacceptable. As my colleagues and I begin considering a range of proposals within the NDAA, we do so without the Department of Defense's analysis of the significant developments in China's military capability over the last six months. By failing to meet the report's legally required deadline, the Department of Defense is not meeting its obligation to properly inform Congress of readiness needs and emerging challenges in the Western Pacific.

As the head of the Department of Defense, you are responsible for ensuring that this matter receives top-down attention. I, like you, share the goal of a strong, efficient and effective national defense that protects our nation from current threats and deters the threats of the future. For Congress to support our Armed Forces in that goal, it is imperative that the Department of Defense provide timely reports on the nature of those threats. I look forward to continuing to work with you in this regard.

Sincerely,

J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress