

Dick Johnson  
306 Thackery Avenue  
Catonsville, Maryland 21228-5658  
Email: [ghcincdj@msn.com](mailto:ghcincdj@msn.com)

16 May 2007

Individually Addressed To:

President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Delegates,  
Joint Audit Committee (20), Joint Management of Public Funds Committee (4) Senators ? House  
and Spending Affordability Committee:

RE: Maryland State Police Aviation Command (MSPAC)  
Helicopter Replacement Program \$152 Million.

Dear Senator and or Delegate:

I have enclosed two articles concerning the Dauphin Helicopter. One article addresses the U. S. Coast Guard Fleet Upgrade, 89 Dauphin Helicopters. The second article addresses Maryland State Police Aviation Command maintenance issue, "tail section broke off". Tail sections never broke off or been reported broken off during many, many years of safe operations since the Dauphin Helicopters came on scene. One could speculate that someone is using and publicizing this event, in which no one was injured to further the replacement issue which is inefficient use of taxpayers money.

As one who has worked closely with law enforcement, I feel a great deal of admiration for their work. With less than adequate pay and often little public cooperation, they offer us their best and we should all be grateful to them. I feel the same about Maryland Troopers and their dedications to the medevac system. I feel they have been caught up in the same systems that does Marylanders so much good. Many were not around when helicopters accidents in previous aircraft took lives. Without knowing it, they take for granted the sacrifices of those who came before them to get where we are today.

For Public Safety, I am compelled to share with you the problem is not the Dauphin, it is maintenance. Whether, it be a helicopter door falling off, helicopter tail section broken off or a major \$788,000.00 helicopter crash into the wall of the shock trauma center, It is not the helicopter. The clinical side is no better, MSPAC "...We do not handle Critical Care Missions as our scope is ALS", long response time or no-show at the scene, nonlife-threatening injury flights, 63.6% or more than 63.6%! I am fortunate that I do not live in rural Baltimore and rural Maryland.

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Also, the Maryland State Police and its Aviation Command's appears to be insensitive to public concerns of "accountability" not operating their agencies in an economic (Cost Overruns/Budget Deficits), efficient and effective manner as demonstrated by the MSPAC's unscrupulous handling of the citizens State Funds and Statistics (See Office of Legislative audits) and a 3<sup>rd</sup> external helicopter study at a cost of \$563,355.18! by the way...have you seen this "Study" yet??

There is a Solution:

Consider what is right for the patient vs MSPAC Design.

Today, Maryland finds itself in the unique and advantageous position of having significantly more medical and law enforcement aviation resources than the system was initially designed with. We can maximize the overall medevac helicopter systems by appropriately incorporating all the resources including the private sector for the most critically injured/ill patients. This can be accomplished without jeopardizing these same critically ill/injured patients. I am promoting cooperation, no abandonment of either private or public operations.

Public and private agencies need to cooperate the most efficient coverage for Maryland Citizens. Replacing the current helicopters does not do this especially since it has been proven by the U. S. Coast Guard that these helicopters can be renewed to provide many more years of useful life. The Coast Guard performs search, rescue, law enforcement and homeland security missions. Why can they renew their aircraft and MSPAC needs new ones?

Conclusion:

As I have stated before, the problem is not the Dauphin helicopters or the dedicated personnel who keep them flying. A major event like the tail piece falling off should not be blown out of proportion to justify buying new helicopters. The ones we have are fine and can provide many more years of same operation.

The problem is the system has grown too big on the lives of those who sacrificed years ago to get where we are today. MSPAC has gone from unfortunate days of fatal accidents in the 70's and 80's to a safety record of having harmed no one since the Dauphin helicopters were purchased.

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But, many things like the systems helicopters, facilities, systems and infrastructure have grown out of proportion to the need. We, the legislature, citizen and systems need to remember what got us here and find ways to make the systems more efficient, not grow larger and cost taxpayers even more money.

The lives and sacrifice of MSPAC troopers and families paved the way for what we have today It would be a testimonial to the value of those troopers to do the best thing for all parties. Don't spend unjustified money to buy new helicopters. Make the system more efficient, keep it safe by upgrading our helicopters like the Coast Guard did, keep the dedicated troopers and medics, cooperate with private providers and ...most of all...keep the burden on the taxpayers of Maryland as light as possible.

Cc: To Web Posted, Members, Legislative, Joint Audit Committee,  
Joint Committee on the Management of Public Funds (House to be announced, Hmm!)  
Spending Affordability Committee  
Public 2007-2010 Web Sites:

Sincerely,

Dick Johnson, Constituent