

July 31, 2025

General Steven Nordhaus
Chief of the National Guard Bureau
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear General Nordhaus:

We write with concern regarding the National Guard Bureau's planned reductions to Title 5 federal civilians in the Air National Guard by 10.7%. This decision will have devastating impacts both on the operations of the New Hampshire Air National Guard (NHNG), but also on the surrounding community of Pease Air National Guard Base. Due to the base's strategic location, unique support to civilian airlift and the first complement of KC-46 aerial refueling tankers, any proposed cuts should be made based on proper analysis on the impact to global operations and the safety of the surrounding community.

Of New Hampshire's 96 Title 5 civilian employees, 51 are firefighters or air traffic controllers. In addition to the Air National Guard, these safety personnel provide services to the Portsmouth International Airport (KPSM) – a critical strategic asset. KPSM is the only airport on the East Coast with the infrastructure to serve heavy-lift and fighter aircraft, and DOD and NATO operations account for over 80% of their business. Just this month, KPSM participated in Operation Atlantic Alliance, a large-scale Navy and Marine Corps training exercise that hosted militaries from the United Kingdom and Netherlands. This exercise involved a Marine Corps fighter squadron, P8 Poseidon aircraft, V-22 Osprey and multiple heavy-lift cargo aircraft. Without proper support from emergency services, this and similar operations would be put at risk.

In fact, any reduction to civilian air traffic control in the United States will compound an existing national, potentially deadly, safety issue. In fiscal year 2024, the Army faced its highest mishap rate since 2008; and the Air Force hit its highest in three years in fiscal year 2023. This also comes as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is facing a historic shortage of air traffic controllers – and needs to hire 3,000 more to meet current demand.

Finally, as the Air National Guard's only unit-equipped KC-46 wing, the NHANG's 157th Air Refueling Wing is unique in its mission and needs. Despite delays from the Air Force and industry, New Hampshire airmen have demonstrated professionalism and skill in their operation of the KC-46 tanker, including on the first-ever overseas deployment of the tanker this year. As delays from industry continue to plague the KC-46's remote vision system, the Air Force cannot afford to accept any safety risk by reducing emergency personnel and air traffic controllers who would respond in the event of an emergency.

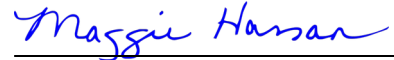
A misguided and hurried reduction in force in New Hampshire will have long lasting safety and operational impacts not just to our state, but across the country. We urge you to exempt these critical public safety roles from any reduction in force without proper analysis and consultation with Congress.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your response.

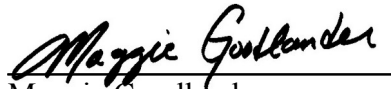
Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Maggie Goodlander
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

CC:

Major General Duke Pirak, Acting Director, Air National Guard