

CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS
5TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON
ASSISTANT WHIP

COMMITTEES:
NATURAL RESOURCES
RANKING MEMBER, WATER & POWER

ARMED SERVICES
EDUCATION AND LABOR

WOMEN'S CAUCUS
Co-CHAIR

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

June 25, 2008

COUNTIES:
ADAMS
ASOTIN
COLUMBIA
FERRY
GARFIELD
LINCOLN
OKANOGAN
PEND OREILLE
SPOKANE
STEVENS
WALLA WALLA
WHITMAN

General Michael T. Moseley
Chief of Staff
United States Air Force
HQ USAF/CC
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear General Moseley,

The 36th Rescue Flight (36 RQF), organized under Air Education and Training Command (AETC) and stationed at Fairchild AFB, provides a vital search and rescue (SAR) capability for base personnel and regional residents. While fundamental to the training objectives of the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) School, the 36 RQF also serves as a critical lifesaving resource for both civilian and military personnel. While based at Fairchild AFB, the 36 RQF has been credited with saving 622 people in the Pacific Northwest.

I remain deeply concerned that removing the 36 RQF from Fairchild AFB will reduce the effectiveness of Air Force survival training and reduce the lifesaving resources in the Pacific Northwest. The four UH-1N helicopters and support SAR personnel, stationed at Fairchild AFB, provide an essential SAR resource to the Air Force and the residents in Oregon, Montana, Idaho and Washington state.

Referencing the May 2008 report, provided by the Air Force, in response to House Report 110-477, page 76, dated 06 Dec 07, which asks for an overview of the Air Force's SAR capabilities in the northwestern United States, I request additional information be provided on this issue. Although the report does an excellent job answering the questions it was intended to address, it does not get at the crux of the SAR concern in the Northwest.

In an effort to better understand the direct contributions of the 36 RQF on SAR capabilities and effectiveness in the Pacific Northwest and better understand the impact removing the helicopters/personnel, from Fairchild AFB would have on the region, I request the Air Force provide response to the items listed below by **1 October 2008**:

1. Provide a detailed description of the SAR capabilities (aircraft, personnel, SAR unique equipment, etc.) of the 36th RQF at Fairchild AFB, the 40th Helicopter Squadron (40th HS), located at Malmstrom AFB, and the Air Force Reserve (AFR) 304th Rescue

1708 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2006
FAX: (202) 225-3392

10 NORTH POST STREET, SUITE 625
SPOKANE, WA 99201
(509) 353-2374
FAX: (509) 353-2412

555 SOUTH MAIN
COLVILLE, WA 99114
(509) 684-3481
FAX: (509) 684-3482

29 SOUTH PALOUSE STREET
WALLA WALLA, WA 99362
(509) 529-9358
FAX: (509) 529-9379

Visit: www.mcmorrisrodgers.house.gov

Flight (304 RQF), located in Portland Oregon. These three units are previously identified as available for SAR missions in the Northwest.

2. Based on 2005 BRAC recommendations, what is the Air Force's plan to realign the 304th Rescue Squadron (AFR) in Portland, Oregon to McChord AFB, Washington? What SAR aircraft/capabilities will be available, at McChord AFB, once the move is complete?
3. What is the nautical distance between the 40th HS and the 304th RQF (pre and post BRAC)?
 - What is the estimated flight time, of the rotary-winged aircraft assigned to each unit, from each location to a random location approximately half way in between the two units (pre/post BRAC)? Assume aircraft are fully manned with flight/rescue personnel and equipment.
 - Given the distance, to the estimated halfway point, what are the refueling requirements and crew-rest guidelines related to such a mission?
 - What is the estimated flight cost to accomplishing a sortie to and from the estimated halfway point between the 40th HS and the 304th RQF (pre and post BRAC)?
4. Provide a break down of the number of missions accomplished at 50-mile increments from the unit's primary bed down location, up to the nautical halfway point between Malmstrom AFB and Portland, Oregon. For instance, so many missions were accomplished within 50 miles, so many within 100 miles, within 150 miles...and so on. Within these distances, breakdown the missions by year and whether in response to civilian or military SAR requests. How many were requested?
5. Given the demands of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and other primary mission responsibilities, what has been the availability of the 36th RQF, 40th HS and 304th RQF to fulfill non-primary mission (non-national emergency – i.e. Hurricane Katrina) SAR request during the last four years? (Requested vs. Fulfilled)
 - Provide a breakdown of the number of these missions requested/accomplished within the distance increments described above and by month.
6. Provide a detailed justification for Air Force removal of the 36 RQF from Fairchild AFB.
7. What is the predicted impact on training effectiveness of SERE students without the support of the 36 RQF? What training objectives will require alteration, simulation and/or be eliminated in the training program?

8. What are the projected overall costs, over the next 10 years, of maintaining the 36 RQF at Fairchild AFB?
9. Given the Air Forces expertise in coordinating/performing SAR activities, what realistic alternatives, for maintaining 36 RQF like capabilities (equipment, availability, responsiveness, etc.) at FAFB, would the Air Force offer should the 36 RQF cease to exist at FAFB.

I appreciate your assistance in addressing this request for additional information, pertaining to this vital issue and request a formal response by 1 October 2008. My Military Legislative Assistant, Major Brian Haug (Air Force Fellow) stands ready to assist and can be reached at 202-225-2006 or brian.haug@mail.house.gov.



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

Attachment:
Report on Search and Rescue Capabilities of
the Air Force in the Northwestern United States

cc:
SAF/LL

CMC/bjh