



SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON

APR 25 2019

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith:

Thank you for your March 28, 2019, letter on the National Security Space Launch Service Procurement. The primary goals of the National Security Space Launch program are to ensure mission success and assure access to space for the critical space assets upon which our warfighters and national decision makers rely.

The National Security Space Launch program has experienced great success over its more than 20-year history. We have had 76 consecutive successful launches placing more than \$50 billion in National Security Space assets into orbit, reintroduced launch service competition, and avoided more than \$14 billion from the National Security Space Launch program life-cycle cost since 2012. I am proud of the men and women of the Air Force who have worked so hard to achieve these great successes.

I am also proud of how the Air Force answered Congress' 2014 directive to transition off the Russian-made RD-180 engine and assure access to space using two domestic launch service providers capable of launching to our most demanding National Security Space orbits. The Air Force, in partnership with industry, rose to that challenge by competitively awarding technology maturation Broad Agency Announcements and Other Transaction Authority agreements through the Rocket Propulsion System and Launch Service Agreement efforts in order to mature commercial technologies and capabilities for National Security Space assets.

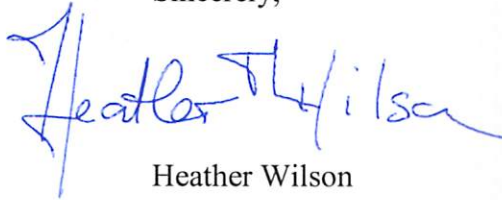
The Air Force has taken a measured approach to minimize risk to the Phase 2 Launch Service Procurements. We procured three more Delta IV Heavy launch services to allow time for industry to develop Category C heavy launch vehicles. We extended Phase 1A competitions by two years to allow industry to mature rocket propulsion systems and adapt their commercial launch systems to meet more stressing National Security Space needs. As a practical risk mitigation for unforeseen delays, we will allow awardees to use "Secondary Launch Systems" for the first two years of the Phase 2 Launch Service Procurement contracts.

The Launch Service Procurement strategy incorporates the best lessons learned over the more than 20-year history of National Security Space Launch and leverages the innovative launch systems that industry is developing today. The Launch Service Procurement Request for Proposal was assessed by several rigorous independent reviews including a business clearance review led by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition (Contracting).

We have actively engaged industry since 2014 to develop this strategy and the Phase 2 Launch Service Procurement Request for Proposal. We specifically solicited industry input on the Launch Service Procurements Request for Proposal and adjudicated over 1,500 industry comments through three rounds of one-on-one discussions with all interested offerors. With a combination of industry inputs, internal Air Force reviews, and independent reviews by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the final Request for Proposal is clear, fair and will enable us to select the best two launch service providers that can meet all National Security Space requirements. All potential offerors have sufficient maturity, and we expect a robust full-and-open competition.

I agree that assured access to space remains a critical component of the Nation's security strategy. The time is right to start the Launch Service Procurement competition by releasing the Request for Proposal now in order to select the two best-value offerors next spring and meet the deadline set by Congress to end reliance on the Russian RD-180 engine. Thank you for your continued support of the Air Force and National Security Space Launch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "H" and a stylized "W".

Heather Wilson