SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAY 27 2014

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Madam Secretary:

As you know, the Department of Defense (DoD) identified, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lincoln Laboratory confirmed, that the proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Project as originally proposed would adversely impact test missions at the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR). DoD formally objected to the Preferred Alternative Route described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement unless four specific mitigations were incorporated into the Record of Decision.

The applicant has for some time indicated acceptance of three of these mitigations (incorporation of appropriate hold harmless agreements, non-interference with WSMR operations during power line construction and maintenance, and micro-siting of the power line to avoid interference with test operations), and I understand that they are now prepared to consider a version of the fourth mitigation (burial of a portion of the line).

To mitigate mission impacts, in consultation with the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Department of the Army, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I have determined that a total of five miles of the power line needs to be buried, in up to three separate segments, so that some low-altitude flight operations can occur. I will have my staff provide you with a mitigation proposal identifying the location of those segments by June 2, 2014.

I am hopeful that this mitigation proposal, which addresses our previous national security concerns, will be acceptable both to the Department of the Interior and to the applicant. If so, DoD formally rescinds its objection to the Preferred Alternative Route as described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, with the expectation that the Bureau of Land Management will move promptly towards issuing a Record of Decision once it completes any other necessary steps.

Thank you.

Chuck Hagel