

January 2, 1986

Honorable Russell A. Rourke
Secretary
United States Air Force
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary,

First, let me officially congratulate you upon being confirmed and sworn in as Secretary of the Air Force. I look forward to working with you as you formally assume your new responsibilities.

You are taking office at a crucial time. The Administration and the Congress must continue to do whatever is necessary to maintain the national security, yet we must at the same time confront budget realities. Recent enactment of the Gramm-Rudman amendment will result in difficult, but necessary, policy choices at the Pentagon, in Congress, and at the White House. It is my hope that the Air Force will set an example by making those budget-reducing policy choices as early as possible.

Mr. Secretary, it is time to formally announce the cancellation of the T-46 Next Generation Trainer program and I urge that you do so at once. It has become obvious that the contract cannot be performed on schedule or within budget, and the contractor has in fact stated its intention to sell and/or close down all aircraft manufacturing facilities.

It is my understanding that the Administration's FY '87 budget will not request additional monies for the T-46 program. I certainly agree with that position. The recently enacted FY'86 defense budget does provide some funding for the T-46, and it is essential that you ensure that these funds are not spent. I, for one, will simply not sit idle and watch the Pentagon waste additional taxpayers' money on the T-46.

You and others within the Air Force have been presented proposals to either modernize the existing T-37 trainers or produce new technology T-37's. Each of these alternatives would result in a savings to the taxpayer of several billion dollars.

Mr. Secretary, you have a great opportunity to demonstrate leadership and your responsiveness to prudent fiscal policies by immediately announcing your intention to cancel the T-46 program. I look forward to a prompt response.

Sincerely yours,

BOB DOLE
Senate Majority Leader