



September 4, 2018

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director, Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St., NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Mulvaney,

Congress for too many years has been receiving troubling reports of toxic exposure in post-9/11 war zones, including Iraq and Afghanistan. As the FY 2018 closes and the U.S. government arranges to spend more than \$140 billion in taxpayer dollars, we seek your support in allocating \$18 million to jumpstart the acquisition of waste management incinerators for U.S. military base camps. The U.S. Government Accountability Office identified that more than 250 burn pits in Afghanistan and Iraq could be converted to eliminate the toxic air threat they pose to our military servicemembers, civil servants and civilian contractors who breathe this poisoned air day in and day out.

The office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) filed a final report on February 10, 2015 (SIGAR 15-33-AL), entitled, "Final Assessment: What We Have Learned From Our Inspections of Incinerators and Use of Burn Pits in Afghanistan." The introductory letter emphasizes a glaring shortfall in adequate prevention that still exists:

"This report highlights the ways in which incinerator operations in Afghanistan were not conducted in a manner that resulted in the most efficient use of U.S. taxpayer funds.... Given the fact that DoD has been aware for many years of the significant health risks associated with open-air burn pits, it is indefensible that U.S. military personnel, who are already at risk of serious injury and death when fighting the enemy, were put at further risk from potentially harmful emissions from the use of open-air burn pits."

The challenges cited in the SIGAR report have not been addressed by those who have the requisite authority and responsibility. A December 2017 Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health report, "Implementing Waste Disposal Alternatives in Overseas Contingency Operations," compiles efforts aimed at further *study* of the problem – DoD is focused on more studies. What we need is *action*: specifically, the use of solutions that already exist.

Incinerators have proven effective in the field, however, the approximately 60 incinerators currently installed in Iraq and Afghanistan only address 20 percent of the need; DoD still needs at least 250 incinerators for the remaining open-air burn pits. Incinerators eliminate the bulk of toxic waste and address the immediate problem. Advanced "waste-to-energy" technologies are too immature to delay the mandated use of incinerators available now.

By this letter we put our full support behind the Combatant Commanders and other senior leaders responsible for the environmental quality experienced by their troops for the equipment they need.

Our immediate goal is to help the U.S. military do the right thing by securing this investment to acquire the necessary equipment. In FY 2020, we will urge OMB to allocate \$150M or more in funding to eliminate additional open-pit burning in overseas contingency operations just as it has been outlawed in the U.S. since the early 1970s. Over 140,000 actively participating servicemembers and veterans have registered for the Department of Veterans Affairs Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry; we trust that our message will resonate with American military leaders, who take pride in the care of their troops.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey E. Phillips
Maj. Gen., USA (Ret.)
Executive Director
Reserve Officers Association



Frank Yoakum
Sgt Maj, USA (Ret)
Executive Director
Enlisted Association of the National Guard