

COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

16<sup>th</sup> Legislative  
Assembly

2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary  
Session

**SENATE OF PUERTO RICO**

**S.R. 670**

September 21, 2009

*Presented by Senator Nolasco Santiago*

Referred to

**RESOLUTION**

To express the support of the Senate of Puerto Rico for the Puerto Rico Air National Guard's 156<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing to remain a viable and operationally relevant Hercules C-130 unit; to call for a Congressional inquiry regarding the future of the 156<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing, projected aircraft assignments and military readiness.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSES**

The 156<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing of the Puerto Rico Air National Guard (PRANG) has been recently awarded with the coveted U.S. Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. It's a versatile and relevant unit whose importance is highlighted by the missions they perform. The Hercules C-130 E of the 156<sup>th</sup> has been supporting fifty percent of U.S Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) theater airlift known as Operation Coronet Oak while supporting multiple global tactical airlift and training missions to include deployments to Germany and to Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions. The PRANG is the primary unit tasked with humanitarian relief in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands and has a central role in such operations for the Caribbean Basin and South America. Relying on just eight C-130 E, their operational success exemplifies what the right personnel with the right equipment can do.

Therefore, it will be extremely detrimental for national security to carry forward plans to reduce by half the number of C-130 E assigned to the unit and to dismiss forty percent of the personnel by October 2010. This happens as there's a steady raise in the threat level poised by non-regional terror organizations and hostile countries as they gain footholds in the region, cooperation between regional drug cartels, ALBA Bloc countries involvement with

narcoterrorism, and upgrades to Venezuelan force projection capabilities to include even Russian sold SU-30MK fighters an hour and a half flight time from Puerto Rico.

These plans to take away half the C-130s assigned to the 156<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing are being made notwithstanding the opinion to the contrary by the Air Force South Commander, the Mobilization Assistant to SOUTHCOM Commander, the Air National Guard advisor to the Air Mobility Command and the PRANG. They have concluded that at least eight C-130s are needed in order to continue supporting SOUTHCOM's theater airlift while effectively supporting the Total Air Force through Overseas Contingency Operations, Homeland Security and ISR.

The potential damage to national security and regional stability that would ensue if this recommendation is not followed is a matter of concern. The southernmost based air unit in American soil can not be submitted to a course of action that doesn't fall short of grounding. The goal to provide security and stability to the Americas is better served by keeping relevant in-theater military assets as forward as possible. Therefore, the Senate of Puerto Rico expresses its support for the 156<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing to remain a viable and operationally relevant C-130 unit and call for a Congressional inquiry regarding the future of the 156<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing, projected aircraft assignments and military readiness.

TO BE RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF PUERTO RICO:

1 Section 1. - The Senate of Puerto Rico expresses its support for the Puerto Rico Air  
2 National Guard's 156<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing to remain a viable and operationally relevant Hercules C-  
3 130 unit.

4 Section 2. - The Senate of Puerto Rico call for a Congressional inquiry regarding the  
5 future of the 156<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing, projected aircraft assignments and military readiness.

6 Section 3. - Copies of this Resolution will be sent to the chairs of the House and Senate  
7 Armed Services Committees and the Congressman for Puerto Rico, the Honorable Pedro  
8 Pierluisi.

9 Section 4. - This Resolution will come into force immediately after its approval.