

Officials committed to seeing critical national defense work grow at Rome Lab

WASHINGTON, D.C.– U.S. Reps. Richard Hanna and Bill Owens and U.S. Sens. Charles E. Schumer and Kirsten E. Gillibrand and recently wrote a letter to U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, urging him to support and protect the critical national security work being done in Rome, N.Y. at the Air Force Research Laboratory (Rome Lab).

The Members of Congress said they're committed to working together to protect and promote Rome Lab and ensure the critical research and advancements in the fields of cybersecurity, science and technology research, and unmanned operations continues to grow. They're hopeful that the 2013 Department of Defense budget reflects an increased investment in Rome Lab, the group said in its letter to Panetta sent Friday.

The congressional representatives contend Rome Lab is a pivotal component of the nation's 21st century defense initiative, and that the capabilities and operations performed at the facility are essential to retaining the nation's decisive technological edge. The delegation also states that Rome Lab plays an important role in U.S. technological superiority, and that there is no greater example of innovative accomplishments in the fields of cyber-defense and unmanned aerial systems than Rome Lab.

Rome Lab is one of eight research and development labs run by the U.S. Air Force located at the former Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome. It is one of just four superlabs run by the Air Force and is part of the Air Force Materiel Command Air Force Research Laboratory, based at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

Rome Lab's close proximity to many nationally recognized universities such as Syracuse University, SUNYIT, Clarkson University, Cornell University, Utica College, and Hamilton College, and several others, is an invaluable resource. The Lab's placement leverages cooperative grant programs, academic co-ops, exploratory research initiatives, and related collaborations with private sector allies and universities alike. These partnerships multiply the possibilities for potential cost-effective innovation that would benefit both the Department and the community at large.

"It's important that Secretary Panetta understand just how important Rome Lab is to the future of our national defense," Rep. Hanna said. "The work performed in Rome is second to none. The administration says it's committed to cybersecurity and high-tech research in its budget. I will work to make sure that commitment translates to a continued investment in the Rome defense assets and more 21st century jobs in Oneida County."

"Rome Labs has been at the forefront of military research, helping to make our national defense stronger while providing hundreds of good-paying jobs to Central New Yorkers," Senator Schumer said. "We're going to work together to protect this critical asset and ensure that it continues to be an economic powerhouse for the Mohawk Valley."

"The Air Force Research Lab in Rome is a crucial piece in our nation's cyber defense and offense infrastructure," said Senator Gillibrand, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. "Rome Lab leverages academic and private sector resources for the benefit of our national security. As the Department of Defense increases its emphasis on cyber, remotely piloted missions, and science and technology, it only makes sense to increase Rome Lab's funding and mission."

"Rome Lab is an invaluable contributor to America's national security as well as the economic development of the region," Rep. Owens said. "The Secretary of Defense has made it clear that advanced technologies and capabilities in areas like cybersecurity will be a top priority in the years to come, and Rome Laboratory has the critical knowledge and expertise necessary to help keep America's military the most advanced in the world. I am pleased to join my colleagues in supporting this local resource."

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February 3, 2012

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Panetta:

We were pleased to see the emphasis you placed on science and technology research, unmanned operations, and cybersecurity as growing fields in the Defense Priorities and Choices strategic guidance. We write to stress how essential the work performed at the Air Force Research Lab in Rome, New York (Rome Lab) is for addressing these vital sectors. We hope the budget for Fiscal Year 2013 will reflect an increased investment in Rome Lab.

The work performed at Rome Lab is a pivotal component of our nation's 21st century defense initiative. The capabilities and operations performed at the facility are essential to retaining our decisive technological edge. We have to be able to stay ahead technologically, and there is no greater example of innovative accomplishments in the fields of cyber defense and unmanned aerial systems than Rome Lab.

Rome Lab also presents a prime example of the valuable opportunities that can be achieved through strategic partnerships between military assets and academic institutions. The location in close proximity to many nationally recognized universities such as Syracuse University, SUNY-IT, Clarkson University, Cornell University, Utica College, and Hamilton College, amongst several others, is an invaluable resource. The lab's placement leverages cooperative grant programs, academic co-ops, exploratory research initiatives, and related collaborations with private sector allies and universities alike. These partnerships multiply the possibilities for potential cost-effective innovation that would benefit both the Department and the community at large.

In addition to the vital role that Rome Lab plays in protecting our national security, the site is also an economic catalyst for the community. Rome Lab supports a very diverse workforce of more than 1,330 government and contractor personnel. The government workforce includes both military and civilian employees, and the total number of jobs created by Rome Lab is more than 2,800 when indirect jobs are also considered. The 2011 Economic Impact Analysis completed by the AFRL/RI Comptroller shows more than \$288 million in expenditures for Research & Development, construction, services and procurement of materials, as well as equipment and supplies. The economic impact is significantly higher when one considers the support businesses that benefit from the presence of Rome Labs including hotels, restaurants and retail stores. The impact area expands throughout Oneida, Herkimer, Onondaga, Madison and Oswego counties of New York State.

As the Department of Defense considers its budget proposal for the coming fiscal year and any proposed new round of Base Realignment and Closures (BRACs), we urge you to ensure that any and all proposals are fair to local communities and economies, and do not endanger national security.

We strongly request that you work with our delegation to support and protect the critical national security work being done in Rome. Thank you for your attention to this important issue, and we look forward to working with you during this important process.

Sincerely,

Richard L. Hanna, U.S. Representative

Charles E. Schumer, U.S. Senator

Kirsten E. Gillibrand, U.S. Senator

Bill Owens, U.S. Representative