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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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PAUL ARCANGELI, STAFF DIRECTOR

October 6, 2010

The Honorable Michele Flournoy
Undersecretary of Defense for Policy
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Flournoy:

I am writing regarding recent reporting about the Administration's decision-making process during last year's Afghanistan Strategy Review and subsequent statements on this review by Department of Defense officials. On Monday, September 27, Bob Woodward reported in the *Washington Post* that President Obama denied requests for any "enablers" above the additional 30,000 troops he planned to deploy to Afghanistan, stating this figure was a "hard cap," and that he did not "want enablers to be used as wiggle room." To date, the Administration has not denied the accuracy of Mr. Woodward's claim, which if true, concerns me for two reasons.

First, during the May 5, 2010 hearing of the House Armed Services Committee on "Developments in Security and Stability in Afghanistan," I expressed my belief that Congress has a moral responsibility to ensure this war is not fought with a minimalist mind-set or with an eye toward the Washington political clock. I specifically asked the witnesses whether the Administration had placed a cap on our troop levels in Afghanistan. In response, you stated: "Sir, I would tell you we do not have a troop cap. Thirty thousand is the number of forces the president has approved. It is not a cap per se." The *Washington Post's* report contradicts your testimony. In order for Congress to properly exercise its oversight role, it is important that we have full confidence in the reliability of Administration officials when they appear for hearings or briefings. I therefore request that you submit a clarification of your statement of May 5.

Second, in the Committee's report on the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act (Report 111-491), the Committee expressed its concern regarding the perception among personnel deployed to Afghanistan of an arbitrary limit on the number of forces that can be deployed to Afghanistan, and that such a limit may have hampered the ability of commanders to deploy needed capabilities. Despite assurances to the contrary from Department of Defense officials in public testimony, the *Washington Post* report appears to confirm the Committee's concerns. The Committee specifically directed the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to the Senate and House Committees on Armed Services by September 1, 2010, on the steps taken to ensure that the perception of an arbitrary limit on United States force levels in Afghanistan does not jeopardize mission success. To date, we have not received this report. I therefore request that you provide this information as soon as possible.

Thank you for your assistance in these matters. We share a common determination to support our brave men and women in uniform as they fight to defend our country, and we have worked closely together towards this end over the past 20 months. I look forward to your timely response and to working together in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Howard P. 'Buck' McKeon". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "H" and "M".

Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member