

DUNCAN HUNTER
52D DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0552

223 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0552
(202) 225-5672
FAX: (202) 225-0235

1870 CORDELL COURT, #206
EL CAJON, CA 92020
(619) 448-5201
FAX: (619) 449-2251

February 14, 2012

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350-1000

Dear Secretary Mabus:

Included in the Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), signed into law by the President in December 2011 (P.L. 112-81), is a provision urging the Navy to name the next available ship after Marine Corps Sergeant Rafael Peralta, who was killed during combat in Fallujah, Iraq. In the time since the enactment of the NDAA, several opportunities to name a ship after Sgt. Peralta have come and gone, with the Navy choosing to pass over Sgt. Peralta and ignore a statement from Congress to name a ship in his honor.

The Navy's ship naming process remains the subject of criticism, based on several recent decisions. There are still opportunities ahead for the Navy to show its intent to uphold the integrity and tradition of this process, beginning with a commitment from the Navy to name a vessel after Sgt. Peralta.

During operations in Fallujah, Iraq, Sgt. Peralta entered a house with several other Marines. When a grenade landed on the floor, Sgt. Peralta pulled the grenade into his body and smothered the blast, saving the lives of the Marines who entered the room with him. For his actions and sacrifice, Sgt. Peralta was nominated for the Medal of Honor, but received the Navy Cross instead—which his family still refuses to accept—after a team of specialists determined that he was mortally wounded upon entering the house and any subsequent actions were not deliberate. Contradicting this judgment are multiple eyewitness accounts and an exhaustive review by the Marine Corps, which assert that Sgt. Peralta consciously took action to save his fellow Marines at the cost of his own life.

Sgt. Peralta's actions and sacrifice, especially in light of the fact that he was wrongly denied the Medal of Honor, deserve proper recognition. Congress is now on record urging the Navy to name a vessel after Sgt. Peralta and, while these decisions historically rest with the Navy, there have been 12 instances in the last 23 years when Congress has taken a position on how a ship should be named.

It is my sincere hope that, as a Marine who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a representative of the San Diego community, which views the Navy and the Marine Corps with an overwhelming sense of pride and admiration, you will give immediate consideration to naming the next available vessel after Sgt. Peralta. This would not only translate into something meaningful for Sgt. Peralta's family, but it would also serve to honor the contribution and sacrifice of every Marine, soldier, sailor and airman who stepped forward to serve in Iraq.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Duncan Hunter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress