

For Immediate Release: *March 1, 2012*

Washington, D.C.— In a [letter to the Secretary of the Navy](#) (SecNav), Representative Duncan Hunter was joined by U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, and the rest of the San Diego delegation—U.S. Representatives Bob Filner, Susan Davis, Brian Bilbray and Darrell Issa—in urging the SecNav to take appropriate action and resubmit Marine Corps Sergeant Rafael Peralta for the Medal of Honor (MoH).

Citing the initial recommendation of the Marine Corps, the accounts of the Marines that were present and the justification presented in the Navy Cross citation, the letter represents a formal request from Congress for reconsidering Peralta’s MoH nomination.

After taking the unprecedented step of forming a scientific panel to review the circumstances of Peralta’s death, then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates downgraded the award to the Navy Cross, based on the conclusion that Peralta—who pulled a grenade to his body during combat in Iraq—could not have consciously performed the action due to a head wound. The finding not only contradicts the Marine Corps’ report and verified medical evidence, but it also contradicts seven witnesses who saw Peralta pull the grenade to himself.

“The burden should not be on the Navy or Marine Corps to prove that Sergeant Peralta did what the evidence and witness accounts say he did,” said Representative Hunter, a Marine combat vet of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. “The responsibility for correcting this mistake rests with the Secretary of Defense, who is in the position to ensure Sergeant Peralta receives the recognition he should have received years ago. Only when the nomination reached Secretary Gates was doubt created—and there’s **EVIDENCE PREVIOUSLY UNAVAILABLE TO INVESTIGATORS** reaffirming just how wrong Secretary Gates and his panel were in reaching their decision.”

In addition to previously unavailable video content, Forensic Pathologist Vincent Di Maio, M.D. reviewed materials in regard to the death of Sergeant Peralta and determined: “Taking into

account the circumstances surrounding the incident: the statements of the witnesses; the condition of the body armor; the autopsy findings; the opinion of the neurosurgeons and neurologist and my own experience with head wounds, it is my opinion that, in all medical probability, Sgt. Peralta was not immediately incapacitated by the brain injury, and in fact reached for the grenade and pulled it under his body.” A copy of the report is available [here](#) .

“Intentionally smothering a grenade to save the lives of others has been traditionally recognized by awarding the Medal of Honor,” added Hunter. “Sergeant Peralta’s actions and sacrifice are within the standard and tradition of the Medal of Honor—and it’s my hope that the Secretary of the Navy will do what’s right and lead the effort to provide Sergeant Peralta with the nation’s highest award for military valor.”