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February 1, 2012

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington D.C., 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In light of reports that the U.S. may release several Taliban prisoners from the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, with the hope of encouraging peace talks with the Taliban, I want to convey my strong opposition to transferring legal custody of any prisoners or moving them from Guantanamo Bay for this purpose. The transfer of prisoners, who have been captured and imprisoned for posing a direct threat to the U.S., sends the wrong message to the Taliban—especially as the U.S. has signaled its intention to eventually withdraw combat forces from Afghanistan.

The Taliban cannot be trusted. After a decade of military engagement in Afghanistan, U.S. service and intelligence personnel have come to understand the Taliban and are familiar with their tactics. The Taliban's targets have not only been U.S. and coalition forces, but also the Afghan people themselves, using fear, intimidation and violence in a desperate attempt to gain a strategic advantage. Releasing prisoners strictly for the purpose of accelerating negotiations undermines the U.S. mission in Afghanistan and deliberately ignores the threat of a Taliban resurgence.

As a Marine officer who served in Afghanistan, I strongly urge you to refrain from transferring legal custody of prisoners from Guantanamo Bay. It is still well within our national security interests to win in Afghanistan. It is absolutely critical that we do not provide the Taliban any advantage that could compromise the Afghan mission or put America's military and intelligence community at risk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter".

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress