



Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
50th District, California

October 23, 2016

The Honorable Ashton Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter:

By now, I know you are well aware of reports that thousands of California National Guard Soldiers have been forced to repay reenlistment bonuses provided through the course of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. For these nearly 10,000 soldiers—amounting to repayment of as much as \$22 million—both failure and difficulty to repay the bonuses has resulted in interest charges, wage garnishments and tax liens.

While an audit revealed that these bonuses were paid in either error or excess, the fact that these payments occurred in the first place in exchange for reenlistment should dissolve any burden on the part of soldiers to repay the bonuses. This is especially true with the understanding of the financial hardship that repayment has caused for many individuals and families, most of them who faithfully upheld their commitment of service.

The Department of Defense—along with the National Guard Bureau—has a duty to continue investigating this matter and address any instances of fraud that might have occurred, but it remains my firm belief that even the simple request of asking soldiers to repay money contingent on reenlistment is disgraceful and insulting. In fact, I find it difficult to believe that either you or your leadership team was aware that such a boneheaded decision was made to demand repayment—and I ask that you utilize your authority to influence a solution, including a possible legislative fix if determined necessary, that's in the best interest of the individuals and families impacted.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter", written over a blue circular stamp.

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress