

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 10, 2009

Major General Charles T. Cleveland
Commander, Special Operations Command Central
U.S. Central Command
7115 South Boundary Boulevard
MacDill AFB, FL 33621-5101

Dear General Cleveland:

We are writing to express our strong disagreement with the decision of your officers to pursue first a non-judicial punishment and now a full court-martial against three Navy SEALs – Matthew McCabe, Jonathan Keefe and Julio Huertas – on charges of assault against Ahmed Hashim Abed – at one point one of the most wanted terrorists in Iraq.

In March 2004, Fallujah, Iraq was a hub of insurgent activity. Four American civilians working as contractors were ambushed and killed; their bodies were mutilated and burned, then dragged through the streets and hung from a bridge over the Euphrates River - one of the most horrific outrages perpetrated on Americans in the last decade. The man widely identified as the mastermind of that attack, as well as other attacks on United States and coalition troops in Iraq, is Ahmed Hashim Abed.

For over five years Abed evaded capture until Matthew McCabe, Jonathan Keefe and Julio Huertas finally brought him to justice. Instead of being hailed as heroes, these brave Americans are being vilified for allegedly assaulting Abed once he was in custody. First, press reports raise significant doubts about whether Abed was actually in SEAL custody when his alleged minor injuries occurred. Second, al-Qaeda's own handbook instructs their operatives to allege detainee abuse if detained by American forces. In fact, al-Qaeda operatives are trained to self-inflict injuries for the sole purpose of accusing U.S. forces of abuse. We've seen repeated cases of this since the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan began.

General, surely you agree that we are in a war that we must win. Our military personnel are putting their lives on the line every day trying to track down terrorists who want to indiscriminately kill Americans. Our troops and your SEALs need to be bold and decisive in combat; not looking over their shoulder fearing legal jeopardy for every action or gesture. In this case in particular, there is more than enough doubt as to whether these SEALs committed any wrongdoing at all. In our opinion, prosecutorial discretion should have been exercised. Failing that, we respectfully and strongly urge you to exercise your leadership authority, stop the impending court martial and exonerate these men.

We await your prompt response.

Sincerely,



CC: Hon. Barack Obama, Hon. Robert Gates, Adml. Mike Mullen

Thurman M. White

J. J. J.

Delia Nunn

Sue Myrick

Sam Co ok-4

J. M. H. TX-24

W. H. B. PA-16

Ch. S. G. GA-11

W. H. B. W. CA-2

Mary J. W. OK-5

Steve King IA-5

Shelley Moore Caputo

Hausa Blackburn

Joe Barton ✓

Mr. Hardy AZ-3

W. G. Allen MO-2

Eric P. B. 50th

John G. T. THOMAS PA-05

Bob B. UT-1

David P. Lee TX-01

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