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LIEUTENANT GENERAL NORMAN R. SEIP, USAF (RET.)
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MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS J. ROMIG, USA (RET.)
MAJOR GENERAL ANTONIO M. TAGUBA, USA (RET.)
BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN ADAMS, USA (RET.)
BRIGADIER GENERAL STEPHEN A. CHENEY, USMC (RET.)
BRIGADIER GENERAL EVELYN P. FOOTE, USA (RET.)
BRIGADIER GENERAL DENNIS GEOGHAN, USA (RET.)
BRIGADIER GENERAL DAVID R. IRVINE, USA (RET.)
BRIGADIER GENERAL MURRAY G. SAGSVEEN, USA (RET.)
BRIGADIER GENERAL STEPHEN N. XENAKIS, USA (RET.)

September 14, 2015

Dear Presidential Candidate,

We are a nonpartisan group of retired generals and admirals of the U.S. Armed Forces who have dedicated our professional lives to defending the national security of the United States. We believe it is essential for the next President, as Commander in Chief, to ensure that the United States adheres to standards for interrogating enemy prisoners and suspected terrorists that are effective, lawful, and humane. Regardless of the outcome of the presidential nomination process, the statements you make and positions you take on the national stage during the campaign will have an indelible impact on our nation. Accordingly, we urge you to publicly and unequivocally reject the use of torture and cruel treatment of detainees in U.S. custody.

We know from experience that U.S. national security policies are most effective when they uphold our nation's core ideals. That's why we worked with Senator John McCain in 2005 to pass the Detainee Treatment Act, which banned cruel treatment of detainees and limited Department of Defense interrogation techniques to those authorized by the Army Field Manual. More recently, we supported Senators McCain and Feinstein in their effort to include an anti-torture amendment in the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act. The amendment would prohibit waterboarding and other forms of torture (euphemistically called "enhanced interrogation techniques") by broadening the Detainee Treatment Act to cover all government departments and agencies. The amendment passed the Senate with the support of a broad bipartisan majority, which included the chairs and ranking members of the intelligence, armed services, homeland security, foreign relations, and judiciary committees.

Torture is unnecessary. Based on our experience—and that of our nation's top interrogators, backed by countless studies—we know that lawful, rapport-based interrogation techniques are the most effective way to elicit actionable intelligence. But torture is actually worse than unnecessary; it is counterproductive and undermines our national security. It increases the risks to our troops, hinders cooperation with allies, alienates populations whose support the United States needs in the struggle against terrorism, and provides a propaganda tool for extremists who wish to do us harm.

Most importantly, torture violates our core values as a nation. Our greatest strength is our commitment to the rule of law and to the principles embedded in our Constitution. Our servicemen and women need to know that our leaders do not condone torture of any kind.

George Washington admonished his soldiers that anyone engaging in torture “bring[s] shame, disgrace and ruin to themselves and their country.” Ronald Reagan pressed the Senate to ratify the Convention Against Torture, stating that the United States must clearly express her will to “bring an end to the abhorrent practice of torture.” We urge you to stand with these leaders and make clear that you oppose the use of torture and cruel treatment of prisoners.

We would welcome the opportunity to brief you in more detail on this issue.

Sincerely

General Charles C. Krulak, USMC (Ret.)
General David M. Maddox, USA (Ret.)
General Merrill A. McPeak, USAF (Ret.)
General Barry McCaffrey, USA (Ret.)
Vice Admiral Richard H. Carmona, USPHS (Ret.)
Lieutenant General John Castellaw, USMC (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Robert G. Gard, Jr., USA (Ret.)
Vice Admiral Lee F. Gunn, USN (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Richard L. Kelly, USMC (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Claudia J. Kennedy, USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Charles P. Otstott, USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Norman R. Seip, USAF (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Harry E. Soyster, USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Keith J. Stalder, USMC (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Willie Williams, USMC (Ret.)
Major General John Batiste, USA (Ret.)
Major General Paul D. Eaton, USA (Ret.)
Major General Eugene Fox, USA (Ret.)
Rear Admiral Donald Guter, JAGC, USN (Ret.)
Rear Admiral John D. Hutson, JAGC, USN (Ret.)
Major General Carl B. Jensen, USMC (Ret.)

Major General Michael R. Lehnert, USMC (Ret.)
Major General J. Michael Myatt, USMC (Ret.)
Major General William L. Nash, USA (Ret.)
Major General Eric T. Olson, USA (Ret.)
Major General Thomas J. Romig, USA (Ret.)
Major General Walter L. Stewart, Jr., USA (Ret.)
Major General Antonio M. Taguba, USA (Ret.)
Major General Margaret Woodward, USAF (Ret.)
Brigadier General John Adams, USA (Ret.)
Brigadier General David M. Brahms, USMC (Ret.)
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Brigadier General James P. Cullen, USA (Ret.)
Brigadier General Evelyn P. Foote, USA (Ret.)
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