

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 31, 2012

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Panetta:

We are writing regarding the Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group (APSG), which is aimed at providing a forward-looking, independent assessment of the current situation in the two countries, similar to the Iraq Study Group. As you know, \$1 million was appropriated in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012 for this purpose. We believe this assessment is both timely and necessary.

Last month, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of the war in Afghanistan delivered a grim assessment of the security gains made in Taliban strongholds as the United States prepares to withdraw its troops. News coverage of the most recent NIE report detail that rampant corruption, incompetence at every level of government, and cooperation by neighboring countries like Pakistan in harboring terrorists have made hard-fought security gains in Afghanistan appear transient.

The time has come for the American public to obtain an independent assessment of the situation on the ground in both countries. The public also should know the metrics being used to measure success in both countries and the best way to move forward. A nonpartisan, nongovernmental analysis of conditions in both countries will be indispensable in helping the American public to understand the complexities in both countries.

We also would like to request information on the selection process for the organization that will conduct the APSG. It is not yet clear which organizations will be authorized to bid or how they will be selected after they bid. These details should be forthcoming and bidding should begin as soon as possible.

In President Obama's State of the Union speech, he noted that "we will stand for the rights and dignity of all human beings – men and women; Christians, Muslims, and Jews" and that the United States will support policies that lead to "strong and stable democracies." The time is now for a clear-eyed assessment on how we are meeting those goals in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

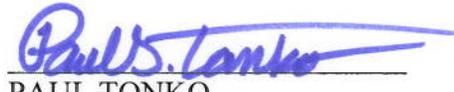
We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


JIM McDERMOTT
Member of Congress

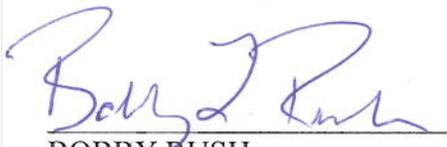

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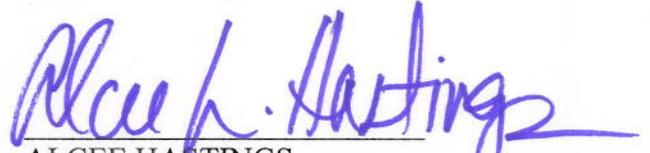

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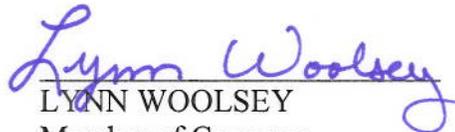

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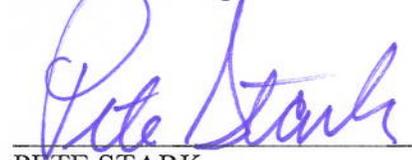

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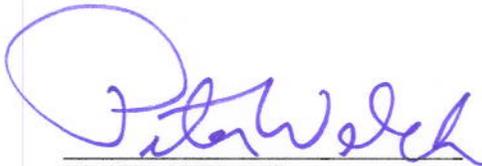

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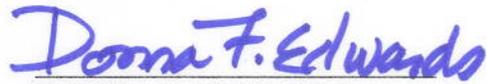

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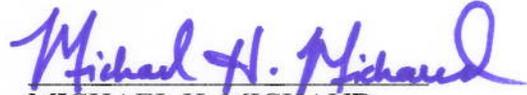
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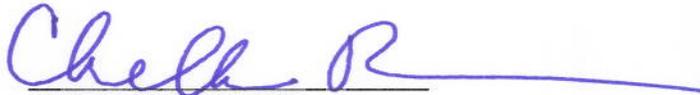
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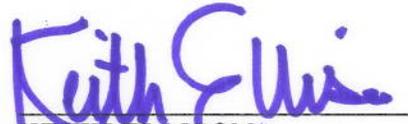
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Cc: General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Thomas E. Donilon, National Security Advisor, White House