



Major General Michael R. Lehnert, USMC (Ret.)

May 13, 2015

Dear Representative,

I am a member of a coalition of more than 60 retired general and admirals of the United States Armed Forces who have consistently worked to find a way to responsibly close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. I was the first commander of the detention facility at Guantanamo. Keeping the prison open undermines American laws and values, and it harms our national security. This is not a partisan issue. It is an American issue. I and my colleagues are as we were on active duty -- nonpartisan.

As has been the case in previous years, the issue of Guantanamo will be part of the National Defense Authorization Act, which will be debated this week. Guantanamo does not serve America's interests. As long as it remains open, it will undermine America's security and status as a land where human rights and the rule of law matter. I write to urge you to vote yes on the Rep. Smith and Rep. Nadler amendment, which provides a common sense framework to close the detention facility by December 31, 2017. It requires the President to provide a detailed plan for the disposition of the remaining Guantanamo detainees, permits detainees to be transferred to the U.S. and detained in U.S. facilities, and eliminates funding for the detention facilities at Guantanamo by December 31, 2017.

In the same vein I encourage you to vote no on the Rep. Walorski amendment, which would establish more onerous restrictions on transferring detainees than has ever been passed into law. Rep. Walorski's amendment would ban transfers of detainees who had once been designated for detention or trial. It would also prevent the Secretary of Defense from using a national security waiver to transfer any detainee to a "combat zone"—a term used to provide tax exemptions to service members but which has no connection to where Guantanamo detainees can be safely transferred. Countries that would be barred include Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina—U.S. allies where there has not been active hostilities for more than a decade and which have successfully resettled Guantanamo detainees. The Walorski amendment would also prohibit for two years the transfer of 102 out of the 122 detainees currently housed at Guantanamo, including many of the 57 detainees who have been unanimously cleared for transfer by our national security and intelligence agencies.

Closing Guantanamo is in our national security interest. It is also about reestablishing who we are as a nation.

Semper Fidelis,


Major General Michael R. Lehnert, USMC (Ret.)