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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

May 21, 2013

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ROBERT L. SIMMONS, II, STAFF DIRECTOR

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I strongly support closing the detention facility located at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (GTMO) as soon as possible. Until that facility is closed, it will continue to symbolize an unjust attempt to avoid the rule of law and to undermine the United States' moral standing in defending its values and protecting human rights. GTMO undermines our national security because al-Qaeda continues to evoke it when rallying violent extremists to its cause. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, and former U.S. Central Commander General David Petraeus all advocated closing GTMO. The reasons that they cited, as senior civilian and military leaders, remain valid.

I write to add my strong support to your efforts to re-engage with Congress on this issue. I will do everything I can to aid those efforts.

I ask you to appoint a senior official, either to your White House staff or to a senior position within the Department of State, charged with leading the renewed efforts to transfer those detainees held at GTMO who have been cleared for transfer by the Guantanamo Detainee Review Task Force. The appointment of a senior leader to negotiate and effectuate international detainee transfers is fundamental to a renewed effort to close GTMO.

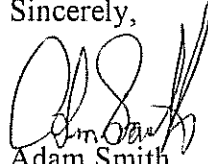
I also ask you to make several efforts to expedite the transfer of detainees whose transfer from GTMO will not hurt the security of the United States. First, request Secretary of Defense Hagel to study the feasibility of using the national security waiver to transfer low-risk detainees. Second, implement a limited waiver of your ban on transfers to Yemen. Third, prosecute all the detainees who can be tried in U.S. federal courts or in Military Commissions, now. Prosecute these cases at GTMO or ask Congress for a waiver to try them in the United States.

Finally, I also request that you expedite the implementation of the Periodic Review Board process that has been mandated by Congress.

While these tasks will not be easy, they are the right things to do. As another military leader, former Marine Commandant General James L. Jones, asserted while he was your National Security Advisor, GTMO can be closed in a safe and secure manner "that promotes our national security and helps our troops in the war against al-Qaeda."

Once again, Mr. President, I thank you for your renewed commitment to close GTMO. I agree with General Jones that closing GTMO enhances our national security. I look forward to working with you in this important effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Smith
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable John F. Kerry, Secretary of State
The Honorable Charles "Chuck" T. Hagel, Secretary of Defense
The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr., U.S. Attorney General
The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee