

June 9, 2015

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John McCain
United States Senate
218 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
United States Senate
728 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators McCain, Feinstein, Collins and Reed:

We are writing to thank you for your work on and support of an amendment to the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act introduced today by Senator McCain. This amendment would help ensure that the United States does not authorize abuse of detainees in future times of crisis by clarifying and strengthening U.S. laws against torture and cruel treatment.

We know from our decades of experience representing the United States at home and overseas how engaging in abuse of detainees damaged U.S. relations with other nations. Some strategic partners and allies questioned whether they could trust the United States, and some reduced their cooperation with us. Our government lost credibility in the eyes of many to continue to champion the rule of law. These relationships and that credibility are essential to our national security, particularly in an age when threats against the U.S. emanate from all corners of the globe and the cooperation of allies and friends is so essential. Passing your amendment would send a powerful message the world over that the United States is serious about learning from and never again repeating serious mistakes that were made in the aftermath of 9/11.

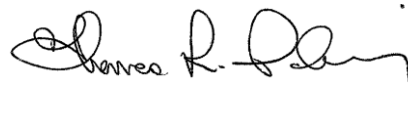
While the amendment's two basic requirements – that all government personnel conducting wartime interrogations abide by the Army Field Manual on Interrogation, and that the International Committee of the Red Cross be given prompt access to all detainees in U.S. custody or control – would not change existing practice, it is important to legislate them. Policies and practices can be rescinded and perceived ambiguities or weaknesses in existing law could be exploited in a future crisis to justify prisoner abuses, as occurred after 9/11. Your amendment would eliminate that risk and leave no doubt that the United States is committed to humane treatment, the rule of law and full observation of our treaty obligations – a commitment we know that you share.

Thank you again for this important piece of legislation. We will be urging other Members to support it.

Sincerely,



Ambassador James R. Jones



Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering