

## CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF WASHINGTON, DC 20318-9999

23 June 2014

The Honorable Carl Levin Chairman, Committee on Armed Services United States Senate Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Levin:

I supported the Secretary's decision to exchange five Taliban detainees for the release of Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl.

In arriving at my military advice, I balanced the risk of transferring the detainees with the importance of returning a U.S. soldier from enemy captivity. I concluded the risk posed by the detainees' future activity would be less grave than breaking faith with our forces in combat.

While the detainees' future activity could become a threat to our Afghan partners or to U.S. forces in Afghanistan beyond 2014, Qatari assurances substantially reduced the near-term risk. Longer-term risk is balanced by the fact that Afghanistan today is different from Afghanistan 12 years ago. The Taliban are widely challenged and control few areas. With continued international support and development of Afghan Security Forces, I believe the reintroduction of these former Taliban leaders will be managed at moderate risk.

The greater and more damaging risk, in my opinion, would have been to leave a U.S. Service member behind. After 5 years, this transfer was likely our last, best opportunity to free him. I understand the risks and have concerns, but I know our Nation's security ultimately lies where it always has—in the courage and commitment of our men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces. I have no doubts about the decision to keep faith with our men and women in uniform.

Sincerely,

MARTIN E. DEMPSEY

General, U.S. Army

ee: The Honorable James M. Inhofe Ranking Member