



Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
50th District, California

September 17, 2015

The Honorable Ash Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter:

The issue of gender integration in ground combat units continues to demand serious and thorough examination. Having served as a Marine in Iraq and Afghanistan, as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, and the author of a provision in last year's National Defense Authorization Act requiring the development of gender neutral standards, I have followed this matter closely. And recent statements by Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus—openly criticizing the Marine Corps and its study on the impact of gender integration—have created a deep sense of concern for the ability of the Navy Secretary to be objective and to continue leading the Marine Corps.

In fact, when criticizing the Marine Corps study, the Navy Secretary stated that he would under no circumstances support any Marine Corps request for exemption—without knowledge of whether such a request will be made—before he was even briefed on the 900-page study and its findings. That alone underscores the fact that the Navy Secretary is biased in his judgment and should be withdrawn from any decision-making that occurs with respect to the Marine Corps' gender integration plan. I am aware that there remains uncertainty—based on competing guidance within the Pentagon—on the appropriate role of the service secretaries in this process. The Navy Secretary has provided you sufficient cause to remove him from this process.

Further, it is my recommendation that immediate consideration be given to obtain the resignation of the Navy Secretary. He has openly disrespected the Marine Corps as an institution, and he insulted the competency of Marines by disregarding their professional judgment, their combat experience and their quality of leadership. Such a significant loss of respect is detrimental to the ability of the Navy Secretary to effectively lead the men and women of the Marine Corps and ensure the service maintains the highest level of combat effectiveness. For this reason, it is important to seek a new Navy Secretary who will not be compromised by politics.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter", written over a large, stylized blue scribble or flourish.

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress