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United States Senate

January 7, 2015

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The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

I am writing regarding the award of the Purple Heart to servicemembers and the Secretary of Defense Medal for the Defense of Freedom to civilian employees of the Department of Defense or civilian contractor personnel, killed or wounded in the terrorist attack at Fort Hood, Texas in 2009. As you know, Section 571 of the Fiscal Year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 113-291) changed the eligibility of the Purple Heart and the Medal for Defense of Freedom to include victims of attacks by individuals or organizations in communication with foreign terrorist organizations and inspired or motivated by the foreign terrorist organization. This change in eligibility for the Purple Heart is retroactive to September 11, 2001.

As the FY2015 NDAA was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President nearly a month ago, I am disappointed that the Army still has made no announcement for the award of the Purple Heart to the servicemembers killed or wounded from the Fort Hood attack in 2009. Servicemembers and their families have been waiting more than five years for this award and further delay is inexcusable. Similarly, those DoD civilians and contractor personnel should not have to wait for a determination on the Medal for Defense of Freedom. While the NDAA requires the Secretary of the Army to review past terrorist attacks for eligibility under the new Purple Heart award criteria, the Fort Hood terrorist attacks and the connection of Nidal Hasan to foreign terrorist organizations has already been documented by both the Army's trial of Nidal Hasan and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's independent investigation into the Fort Hood attacks.¹

Please provide me with the Department of Defense's plan and timeline to comply with Section 571 of the FY2015 NDAA no later than January 31, 2015. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senator

¹ Final Report of the William H. Webster Commission on the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Counterterrorism Intelligence, and the Events at Fort Hood, Texas on November 5, 2009. <http://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/final-report-of-the-william-h.-webster-commission>