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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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February 16, 2017

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write today regarding the vacant director position at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). DPAA serves an important mission at the Department of Defense (DOD), which is to provide the fullest possible accounting of missing service members from past conflicts. I have been engaged in oversight of this agency since 2013, as it transformed from a disparate group of unaccountable components plagued by infighting, low morale and inefficiencies into a single agency.¹

One key aspect of that transformation was the creation of a single chain of command with a single director leading the agency and its mission. I was pleased with the efforts by former director Michael Linnington to make improvements to DPAA's operations. However, since Mr. Linnington's departure in July 2016, the director position has been vacant. In its latest congressional update, DPAA reported that the search continues and that some hiring actions are on hold due to the civilian hiring freeze.² While I understand that the acting director has done an admirable job in the interim, the need for permanent leadership is essential. A permanent director ensures that DPAA continues to make sustained progress. The longer this position remains vacant the greater the potential for the agency to backslide on its hard-won accomplishments.

I urge you to review the hiring process at DPAA and to direct the agency to move forward in hiring a qualified director as soon as is practicable. I also request that DPAA provide my staff with an update on the status of hiring a director and the impact of the hiring freeze on the process by March 10, 2017.

¹ Senate Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight, *Hearin g on Mismanagement of POW/MIA Accounting*, 113th Cong. (Aug. 1, 2013) (S. Hrg. 113-293).

² Email from Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Staff (Feb. 15, 2017).

The Honorable James Mattis
February 16, 2017
Page 2

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please contact Sarah Garcia with my committee staff with any questions at (202) 224-2627. Please send any official correspondence related to this request to Amanda_Trosen@hsgac.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member

cc: Ron Johnson
Chairman