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June 4, 2008

The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1300 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1300

Dear Mr. Gates,

I would like to know if the Department of Defense has reexamined its chaplain approval process for the military since the arrest and conviction of Abdurahman Alamoudi. As you may know, Abdurahman Alamoudi was responsible for setting up the Muslim chaplain program for both the prison and military system, which included the Islamic groups that had the authority to certify someone to serve as a Muslim chaplain. In 2003 he was arrested and in 2004 he pled guilty to charges related to his activities in the United States and abroad with nations and organizations that had ties to terrorism.

I am deeply concerned about the guidance that is being provided to our young men and women fighting in defense of our freedoms and for the freedoms of people throughout the world. Specifically, I would like to know how a Muslim chaplain in the military would guide a Muslim soldier that has seen a fatwa, an edict on Islamic Law espoused by a scholar, which prohibits any Muslim soldier from fighting other Muslims?

I have learned that a military officer asked a Muslim chaplain how he would answer such a question from a soldier. The chaplain tried to avoid answering the question and referred the military official to a Muslim organization because the chaplain was not authorized by Islamic law to issue a contradictory fatwa that would make it permissible to fight in Iraq. I find this distressing as such a scenario has a high probability of occurring and such a fundamental question needs to have a defined answer.

In light of the conviction of Abdurahman Alamoudi on terrorism charges, I believe that due diligence would require a thorough examination of the approval process, including the groups that are permitted to certify chaplains and the chaplains that were appointed through the process organized by a convicted terrorist.

I look forward to your response and to know what steps have been taken by the Department of Defense to ensure that the program set up by Alamoudi has not been a Trojan Horse experience that has left our chaplain corps infiltrated by people who seek to do our country harm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue", written in a cursive style.

Sue Myrick  
Member of Congress