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# United States Senate

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February 10, 2009

Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Honorable Eric K. Shinseki  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave.  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Gates and Secretary Shinseki,

We are writing to request that you convene the DoD/VA Senior Oversight Committee (SOC), because we are very concerned about the recent reports of increased suicides among active duty servicemembers. Between 1995 and 2007, there have been over 2,200 suicides among active duty servicemembers.

Such loss is unacceptable if there is any measure that can be taken to reduce it. We request that you meet as soon as possible to ensure that both the resources of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs are brought to bear on this problem. The SOC should move immediately to determine whether deficiencies exist in the way potential military personnel are screened, or in the diagnosis or treatment of active duty servicemembers who are suffering from psychological problems.

We believe that convening the SOC to look specifically at suicide prevention is a first and necessary step in a coordinated effort.

Sincerely,



Daniel K. Akaka  
Chairman



Richard M. Burr  
Ranking Member