

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 2, 2008

The Honorable Claude M. Kicklighter
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense
400 Army Navy Drive
Suite 1000
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Inspector General Kicklighter:

We write to express our deep concern over an extremely troubling report recently published in *The New York Times* detailing a high-level, well thought out and extensive program within the Department of Defense to use military analysts to generate positive news coverage of the war in Iraq, conditions at the Guantánamo Bay detention center and other activities associated with the Global War on Terror. We believe that this unethical, and potentially illegal, propaganda campaign aimed at deliberately misleading the American public should have been disclosed long ago by your office, and not by a newspaper that needed to resort to suing the DoD for the information.

According to the report, in the earliest days of the Bush Administration, former Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Torie Clarke began to build a network of “key influentials” that could generate support for then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s priorities and achieve what she called “information dominance.” In 2002, Ms. Clarke allegedly made a decision to make these “key influentials,” former military officers often with impressive military backgrounds, the main focus of the department’s public relations push to make the case to go to war. Responding to an interest from the White House, Ms. Clarke’s staff wrote summaries describing these analysts’ backgrounds, business affiliations and positions on the war.

At it’s peak, the *Times* reports that this behind the scenes network included more than 75 retired military analysts who were being briefed, often by high-level officials in a “powerfully seductive environment” (analysts reportedly met 18 times with Mr. Rumsfeld). The analysts then parroted the administration’s talking points on major television news programs and 24-hour cable news outlets, as well as over the radio and through op-ed articles or quotes in magazines, websites and newspapers. According to the article, internal Pentagon documents describe these military analysts as “message force multipliers” or “surrogates” who could be counted on to deliver administration “themes and messages” to millions of Americans “in the form of their own opinions.” Along with making the case for invading Iraq, these “themes and messages” included repudiating claims that U.S. troops were dying because of inadequate body armor,

pushing back on reports of detainee mistreatment at the Guantánamo Bay prison facility and, according to Lawrence Di Rita, a former top aide to Mr. Rumsfeld, counteracting “the increasingly negative view of the war” that came with the rise of the insurgency. The DoD is even reported to have hired a private contractor to monitor and track the public comments of their military analyst surrogates. As one of them put it, this was “psyops on steroids.”

While we are deeply disturbed by the Pentagon’s taxpayer funded propaganda campaign, we find it equally troubling that the Pentagon used high-level access to DoD contracting officials as an enticement for these analysts to report the Bush Administration’s talking points on the war in Iraq. The military analysts involved in the Pentagon network reportedly represent more than 150 military contractors competing for the hundreds of billions of dollars made available by the Global War on Terror. These analysts were granted special access to the high ranking civilian and military leaders directly involved in determining how war funding should be spent. Such access gave the companies they represent a clear competitive advantage and may have created a culture in which analysts felt they needed to serve as the mouthpiece for the administration in order to gain military contracts for the companies they represent.

Your office is directly responsible for eliminating waste, fraud and abuse at the Department of Defense. Moreover, your mission includes promoting integrity and serving the public interest. This appears to be a high-level, well orchestrated program that was put in place that we presume your office is aware of. We therefore request your response to the following questions:

- 1) When did your office first become aware of this program and did you investigate the matter? If you did open an investigation please provide us with your report. If not, please explain why?
- 2) In every fiscal year since this program’s inception, Section 8001 of the yearly Defense Appropriations bills signed into law has made clear that “No part of any appropriation contained in this Act shall be used for publicity or propaganda purposes not authorized by the Congress.” Do you believe that the activities conducted through this program are in violation of that law or any other? If not, given that this program certainly cost money and was not authorized by Congress, please explain.
- 3) Do you believe that a situation in which individuals representing military contractors obtain unrivaled access to key senior officials and carry out the wishes of those officials creates an environment that is ripe for waste, fraud and abuse?
- 4) Your office includes a unit specifically charged with investigating senior officials. Along with Mr. Rumsfeld and Ms. Clarke, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace and then Director of Operations for the Joint Chiefs James T. Conway were allegedly involved in the program. High-level officials outside of DoD were also reportedly involved, including Vice President Dick Cheney, and perhaps

others inside the DoD as well. Has your office investigated any senior level DoD officials? If so, please provide your findings? If not, please explain why?

- 5) Has your office investigated whether any contract awards were compromised or tainted as a result of the special access granted to the military analysts?
- 6) We understand that in the aftermath of *The New York Times* story and facing criticism from Congress, Robert Hastings, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs determined the program should be suspended indefinitely pending an internal review. Can you please confirm whether your office is conducting this internal review and if so whether you believe the program should be permanently terminated and whether any similar programs in the future should be banned?

When the Department of Defense misleads the American people by having them believe that they are listening to the views of objective military analysts when in fact these individuals are simply replaying DoD talking points, the department is clearly betraying the public trust. Moreover, when these analysts are simultaneously representing defense contractors, the apparent conflict of interest can easily lead to fraud and abuse. We find this deeply troubling, and expect you will share our deep concern.

We thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress


JIM McDERMOTT
Member of Congress


JAMES McGOVERN
Member of Congress


MAURICE HINCHEY
Member of Congress


EDWARD J. MARKEY
Member of Congress


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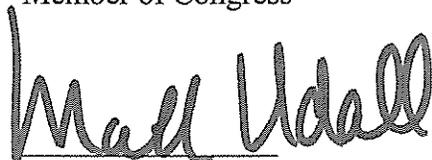

BARNEY FRANK
Member of Congress

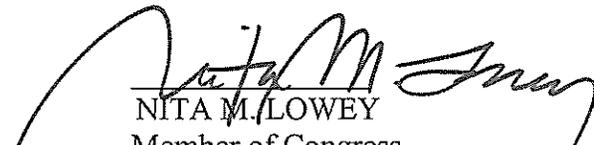

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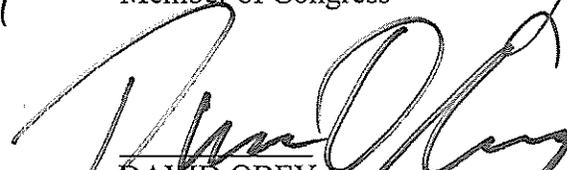

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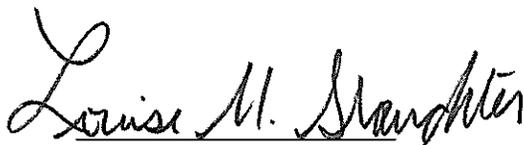

LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress

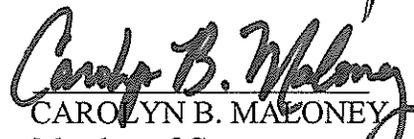

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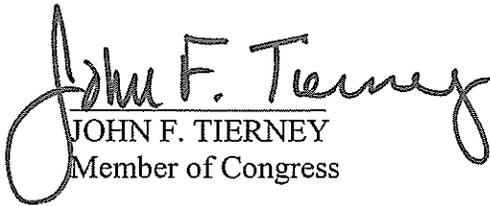
JOHN YARMUTH
Member of Congress



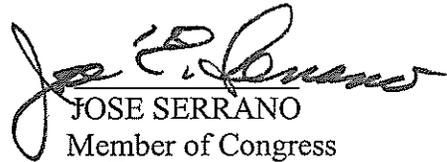
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Member of Congress



MAZIE HIRONO
Member of Congress



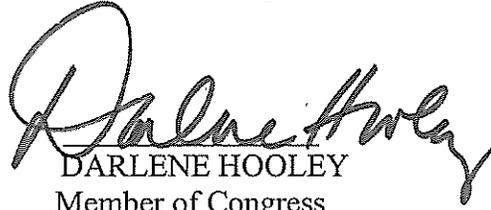
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JOSE SERRANO
Member of Congress



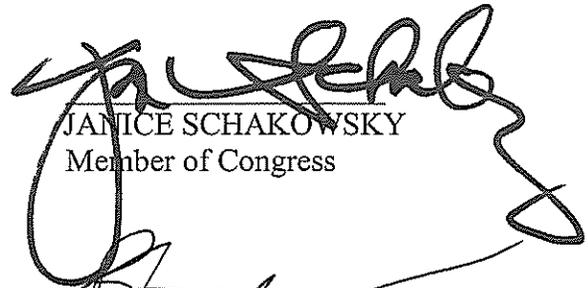
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JANICE SCHAKOWSKY
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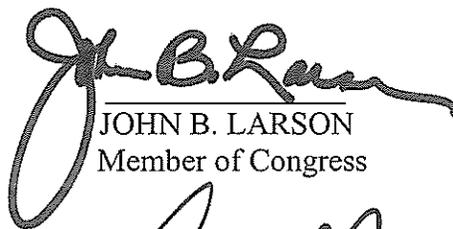
JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



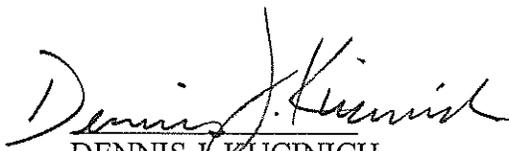
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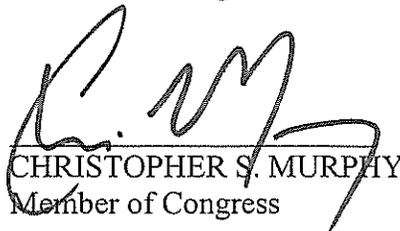
EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



DENNIS J. KUCINICH
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Susan A. Davis". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

SUSAN A. DAVIS
Member of Congress