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Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

October 26, 2015

The Honorable Dr. Ashton B. Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Carter,

We were deeply troubled to learn of the incident which occurred on October 3rd, in which an American AC-130 gunship fired on a Doctors Without Borders (MSF) hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, killing at least twelve staff, ten patients, and wounding more than three dozen others. MSF does critical humanitarian work all over the world, providing medical care to those affected by war, epidemic disease, and natural disasters.


As you have stated, the United States must get to the bottom of what happened. We must know what information US forces had at the time they fired on the MSF hospital. We must know the rules of engagement for US forces in Afghanistan and the procedures established for Afghan security forces to request close air support from US and NATO forces. Crucially, we must know if all parties involved followed these rules and procedures.

While we have faith that Brigadier General Richard Kim will conduct a thorough investigation, we strongly believe that a civilian investigation, outside the military chain of command, is the most appropriate mechanism to investigate this tragedy. A civilian investigation will guarantee the independence and objectivity required to withstand international scrutiny while still allowing access to sensitive military operational detail and procedures necessary to fully understand what occurred.

We therefore strongly encourage you to direct the Department of Defense's Office of Inspector General to open an investigation into this terrible tragedy. A thorough, transparent, and independent investigation is the only way to ensure that the terrible mistakes which occurred in Kunduz are never repeated while also ensuring that all parties, servicemembers and humanitarian workers alike, receive fair treatment in the investigation.

Sincerely,

  
JOHN GARAMENDI  
Member of Congress

  
KEITH ELLISON  
Member of Congress

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ANNA G. ESHOO  
Member of Congress



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HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON  
Member of Congress



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ALAN LOWENTHAL  
Member of Congress

