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Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
50th District, California

May 27, 2015

The Honorable Ashton Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter:

Following developments in Iraq nearly one year ago, I sent your predecessor, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, a detailed letter outlining six steps that should be taken to support Iraq and repel the Islamic State (IS). In large part, my recommendations were centered on selecting for reassignment specific senior military officers—referred to as the “old hands”—to once again forge relationships with key Sunni tribal leaders. At the very least, the officers could provide their insights and perspectives, specific to their previously effective engagement of Sunni leadership. I am providing these initial recommendations again—in the hope that you will give them further consideration.

In addition to these six recommendations, it is now my firm belief that the U.S. must also take action to appropriately arm vetted Sunni tribal elements and immediately embed special operators and ground-air controllers to support ground operations against IS. And in the case of providing arms to Sunni tribes, I believe any such military support can be provided directly. Doing so will counter both the internal Iranian threat and the presence of IS by enabling Sunni tribes to hold their territory. Sunni tribes, armed with American weapons and fighting to protect their areas of interest, present an opportunity for the U.S. to acquire a tenacious and effective ally in the region.

Your recent comments regarding the failure of the Iraqi military in Ramadi were correct—despite the Administration’s best efforts to soften your remarks. By taking the necessary action, I believe we can prompt a turn of events in Iraq. This is possible only with the right leadership and decision-making, both of which, I am confident, you are able to provide.

I greatly appreciate your consideration of these recommendations. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress



Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
50th District, California

June 30, 2014

Secretary Chuck Hagel
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

Please allow me to recommend six steps that should be taken quickly to retrieve Iraq from its current condition of collapse:

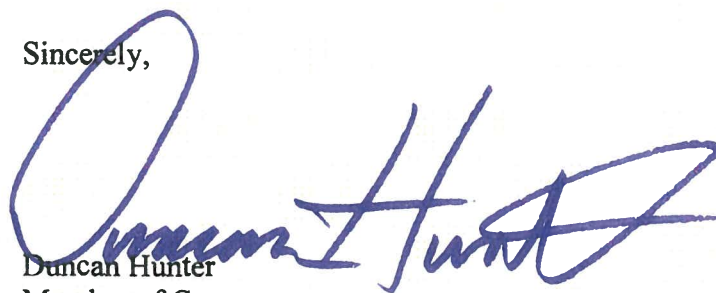
1. Bring up for re-assignment the senior American officers who were the architects of the U.S. victory in the Sunni Wars and Shiite Wars of 2007-2008. These "old hands" have strong relationships with key Iraqi leaders. The Sunni tribes of Anbar Province potentially represent the critical mass of a destructive assault on Iraq's government. They also represent the potential bulwark against the imported-from-Syria-terrorists who are flooding across the border. In 2006, U.S. Army officers such as Sean MacFarland and H.R. McMaster and Marines such as J.D. Alford, Bill Jurney, Joe LeToile and Mike Shupp pulled the Sunni leadership away from Al Qaeda and to America's side. David Petraeus should be used as a liaison with Maliki and his generals. General John Kelly (SOUTHCOM) has the trust of critical tribal leaders in Anbar. These "old hands" and others should be immediately engaged with their respective allies among Sunni and Shiite leaders in an attempt to keep them from joining the wrong side;
2. Locate the 1st Iraqi Division and ascertain its present readiness status. The division, made up of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds proved to be Iraq's best division in 2008-2009. The division swept the Mahdi Army out of Basra in March of 2008. It then pivoted northward, sweeping Sadr City and the Baqubah area. Its commander, General Tariq, and his leadership team proved competent and professional. The sister division of the 1st, the 7th Division, also proved battle-worthy in the late stages of the war. These two divisions should be the foundation of Iraqi defensive operations in the coming months;
3. Locate the American officers who were embedded with the 1st Iraqi Division in the Sunni and Shiite wars in 2007 and 2008. Colonel Bob Castellvi, USMC, led the advisor team that embedded with the 1st Iraqi Division. Castellvi had a longtime, close working relationship with General Tariq and his senior officers. Castellvi should be quickly tasked to re-engage with the 1st Division. He should be asked to recommend key

members of his advisor team and they should be called up immediately. Prime Minister Maliki should be requested to re-instate in the 1st and 7th Divisions any senior Iraqi officers whom Castellvi identifies as effective;

4. Re-embed the U.S. supporting arms liaison teams (SALT) with the 1st and 7th Iraqi Divisions and any other divisions which have exhibited competency. These five-man teams of Americans, including forward observers, radio operators, and joint terminal attack controllers, can bring the leverage of bombers, tactical aircraft and drones to the Iraqi infantry operations with a minimum of U.S. ground participation. In the pivotal Battle of Basra in 2008, the U.S. team with the 1st Brigade of the 1st Iraqi Division proved devastating to the Mahdi Army. Then-Marine Corps Major Tim Bleidistel led the team. Find him;
5. Quickly ascertain any critical equipment and munitions shortages in the 1st and 7th Iraqi Divisions and supply the needed gear and weapons. Then, get Maliki and his defense leaders to move these two divisions quickly into the fighting at the most important tactical points;
6. Utilize national technical means and human intelligence sources to identify the incursion routes the terrorists are taking into Iraq from Syria. Use aerial assets to destroy the invading units and seal the border from further incursion. They are vulnerable while moving in, but will be difficult to weed out once they have embedded.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for considering these recommendations. I respectfully urge you to use the American officers with existing relationships and experience in Iraq. We don't have time for on the job training or long "work-up" periods. Much of this is depends on relationships with key Iraqis. Use what you already have.

Sincerely,



Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress