

CARL LEVIN, MICHIGAN, CHAIRMAN

JACK REED, RHODE ISLAND  
BILL NELSON, FLORIDA  
CLAIRE McCASKILL, MISSOURI  
MARK UDALL, COLORADO  
KAY R. HAGAN, NORTH CAROLINA  
JOE MANCHIN III, WEST VIRGINIA  
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, NEW YORK  
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, CONNECTICUT  
JOE DONNELLY, INDIANA  
MAZIE HIRONO, HAWAII  
TIM KAINE, VIRGINIA  
ANGUS S. KING, JR., MAINE

JAMES M. INHOFE, OKLAHOMA  
JOHN MCCAIN, ARIZONA  
JEFF SESSIONS, ALABAMA  
SAXBY CHAMBLISS, GEORGIA  
ROGER F. WICKER, MISSISSIPPI  
KELLY AYOTTE, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEB FISCHER, NEBRASKA  
LINDSEY GRAHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA  
DAVID VITTER, LOUISIANA  
ROY BLUNT, MISSOURI  
MIKE LEE, UTAH  
TED CRUZ, TEXAS

## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

PETER K. LEVINE, STAFF DIRECTOR  
JOHN A. BONSELL, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

December 18, 2013

The Honorable Charles T. Hagel  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

The committee recently received reports about complaints concerning Christmas nativity scene displays at Shaw Air Force Base and at Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. I believe these complaints are the direct result of the failure of the Department of Defense to promulgate directives concerning the protection and accommodation of religious expression. The absence of this important guidance that is required by section 533 of the Fiscal Year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act means that service members and installation commanders alike are uninformed of the current Department policies to accommodate religious beliefs, conscience, and expression. They are uninformed as to what is and what is not permissible.

While the recent reports are about Christmas displays, throughout the year the committee has continued to receive reports of demands by advocacy groups calling on military installation commanders to remove any symbols that those advocates believe represent official endorsement of religious belief. The clear message in section 533(c) of the fiscal year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act was that the Secretary of Defense must issue regulations to implement these important protections for religious belief and expression provided in the law.

As such, I request an immediate update on the current status of the Department of Defense regulations concerning religious expression as well as the guidance, if any, that has been provided to protect religious expression in the interim period.

I look forward to working with your staff on this matter.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe  
Ranking Member