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August 1, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On your second day in office, you led the country forward by issuing executive orders banning torture and other forms of abusive interrogation. Many of us were in the Oval Office that day, proud to stand behind you as you signaled an end to the misguided policies of the post-9/11 period. As retired generals and admirals, we have worked since that day to build a stronger, more durable consensus against torture in our country so that, at a future moment when our nation is tested, the American people will reject calls to resort to such abuses. We welcomed your public support for declassification of the Senate Select Intelligence Committee's study on the CIA's rendition, detention, and interrogation program. We believe that the American people must understand fully what the program entailed, how it came to be, and what was gained—and lost—because of it.

We write to you today because we believe your strong record against torture is being undermined by members of your own administration.

In part because there has been so little transparency about the torture program, some former government officials continue to claim that so-called "enhanced" interrogation techniques were necessary to disrupt terrorist plots and save lives. Now one of the key proponents of this false narrative that "torture works," the former CIA director George Tenet, is reportedly coordinating with the current leadership of the CIA to discredit the Senate intelligence committee's report. CIA Director John Brennan recently told the Wall Street Journal that he plans to "take issue" with parts of the report that he "believe[s] are inaccurate or misleading."

It is understandable that current and former employees of the CIA feel protective of the agency's reputation and embarrassed by what the Senate study contains. The U.S. military's examination

of torture in its ranks after the Abu Ghraib scandal was painful; it was also necessary to the health of the institution. The stakes are too high to allow the intelligence community to circle the wagons and launch a concerted campaign to undermine the report's credibility. Ultimately, an American public that understands the high costs of torture is the best guarantee against a future president rescinding your executive order and treating torture as a viable policy option.

There is no substitute for leadership from the top on an issue like this. You have set the direction for your administration that torture is unacceptable. But for that leadership to have a lasting impact on the direction of our country, beyond your administration, you must act to ensure that Americans learn the right lessons from our past. We urge you to make clear in no uncertain terms that you expect CIA Director John Brennan to support an expansive declassification of the report and an honest reckoning with its findings.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

General Joseph P. Hoar, USMC (Ret.)
General Charles C. Krulak, USMC (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Robert G. Gard, Jr., USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Claudia J. Kennedy, USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Harry E. Soyster, USA (Ret.)
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