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February 25, 2014

Dear Senator:

We understand that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) will soon vote on whether and to what extent to pursue declassification and public release of its 6,000-plus page study of the post-9/11 CIA rendition, detention, and interrogation program. We write to urge you to vote to declassify and make public as much of the study as possible, with only such redactions as are necessary to protect information that could harm national security.

As retired flag officers of the United States Armed Forces, we believe that our nation is on its strongest footing when our defense and security policies adhere to our values and obligations under domestic and international law. We therefore believe it was a grave mistake to depart from these values and laws when, after the 9/11 attacks, our government employed against terrorism suspects so-called “enhanced interrogation techniques”—commonly known as torture or other forms of official cruelty.

Unfortunately, pundits and some government officials that authorized these techniques continue to claim that their use was lawful, ethical, and necessary to stop terrorist plots and save American lives. The SSCI study, based on a review of over 6 million pages of official documents, is the most comprehensive analysis of the classified record, and is therefore well-positioned to shed light on these claims and other key aspects of the post-9/11 CIA interrogation program that have not yet faced public scrutiny.

Like the CIA, the military also faced allegations of engaging in detainee abuse. In response, the Senate Armed Services Committee conducted an inquiry into these allegations and, in 2009, released a report detailing the systematic failures that led to detainee abuse, as well as recommendations for reform. We believe the military today is a stronger institution for it. The CIA will also be a stronger institution in the long run if it faces up to its past mistakes.

To promote congressional oversight, public transparency, and effective and lawful policy choices on this critical national security issue, we urge you to vote in favor of declassifying and releasing the SSCI's study on the post-9/11 CIA rendition, detention, and interrogation program.

Sincerely,

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General Charles C. Krulak, USMC (Ret.)
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