

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2008

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you regarding the Secretary of Defense's recent decision to reject the recommendation of the United States Marine Corps to award the Congressional Medal of Honor to Sgt. Rafael Peralta for his courageous actions on November 15, 2004, in Fallujah, Iraq. It is our understanding that several members of the California delegation have written expressing their concerns and requesting a review of his case. We would also like to convey our disappointment in this decision and strong support in favor of such a review.

As you know, Sergeant Peralta was awarded the Navy Cross after the Department of Defense conducted a lengthy review of the circumstances surrounding his death and determined his actions were not deserving of the Medal of Honor. It is our understanding that the review panel could not confirm whether Sergeant Peralta's actions were deliberate, despite the fact that several fellow Marines who were witnesses to the events of that day verify that he knowingly reached out to pull in the grenade and absorbed the full explosion with his body. Clearly, Sergeant Peralta made a deliberate decision to absorb the grenade blast in order to protect the lives of the Marines fighting directly by his side.

Mr. President, we would also like to refer to the case of Army medic James Okubo, who was mistakenly awarded the Silver Star for his courageous service in World War II. After reconsideration, the decision was rightly made to award him the Medal of Honor for saving the lives of several of his fellow soldiers in the battlefields in France. This case demonstrates that mistakes can be made in the consideration of our service members for the nation's ultimate military and national honor, but can be corrected after careful consideration of the facts.

We understand the complexities of the issues related to the awarding of the Medal of Honor to our fallen heroes. However, with respect to Sergeant Peralta, we respectfully ask the matter be put to further review, and that, unless a strong case can be made that demonstrates his actions were definitively unintentional, he be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Thank you for your attention to this request and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Senator Daniel K. Akaka



Senator Daniel K. Inouye



Representative Neil Abercrombie



Representative Mazie Hirono