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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3204

August 2, 2006

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
United States Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Suite 319
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write to urge you to reconsider your decision to decline testifying at a public hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday.

As you know, on Thursday the Committee will hold a hearing to receive testimony on Iraq, Afghanistan and the global war on terrorism. General Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General John Abizaid, the Commander of Central Command, are scheduled to testify. According to the notice of the hearing posted by the Armed Services Committee, you will not be joining Generals Pace and Abizaid despite a formal invitation extended to you by the Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman and Ranking Member. Instead, you will appear at a closed briefing open only to Senators later in the day.

As the Senate Committee with primary jurisdiction over the United States military, the Armed Services Committee plays a critical role in conducting oversight over our operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Recent events in both Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate that our forces face difficult challenges in defeating committed insurgencies, providing greater security and helping to foster stable governments.

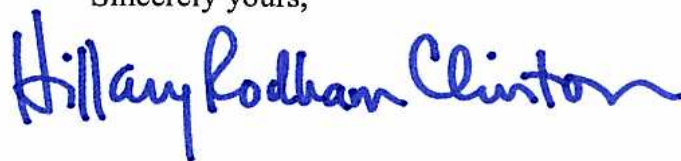
Since the last time you testified at a public hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee was February 7, 2006 – nearly six months ago – a public appearance before the committee is long overdue. As the top official at the Pentagon, you are responsible for implementing the President's Iraq and Afghanistan policies, and for making recommendations to the President as to future plans in both theaters. With approximately 130,000 troops currently serving in Iraq and 20,000 troops serving in Afghanistan in increasingly more dangerous circumstances, the Committee, and more importantly, the American people should hear directly from you.

In our democracy, our military comes under civilian control and policy decisions are made by the civilian leadership. At this critical time in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the Committee and the American people should hear not only from our military's uniformed leaders but also from you as the top civilian leader.

I hope you will reconsider your decision not to testify before the Committee on Thursday.

I look forward to your response and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hillary Rodham Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "H" and a long, sweeping tail at the end.

Hillary Rodham Clinton