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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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January 10, 2008

ERIN C. CONATON, STAFF DIRECTOR

Admiral Michael G. Mullen
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Admiral Mullen:

We are very concerned with the actions of elements of the Iranian Navy interfering with the transit of United States warships through the Straits of Hormuz. As you are well aware, these types of incidents, which transpire quickly, can easily escalate out of control and draw our forces into armed conflict in an area and at a time which is not of our choosing.

It is a testament to the professionalism of the sailors on our ships that they did not allow themselves to be drawn into a weapons exchange with the Iranian patrol craft, but also very troubling that our vessels transiting in international waters were harassed and threatened by the Iranian boats.

Please explain, via classified briefing or correspondence, what procedures the Navy uses to determine hostile intent and what are the instructions given to our commanding officers regarding their rules of engagement in the Straits of Hormuz and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf. Please also explain if the United States has clearly and unambiguously informed the Islamic Republic of Iran, either via military to military or diplomatic means, exactly what types of actions will be considered hostile intent and the consequences of ignoring warnings to stay clear from our warships.

We are committed to working with you to support our military commanders who must make life and death judgments, in real time, without the benefit of the analysis of hindsight. To that end we feel it imperative that our government make it explicitly clear

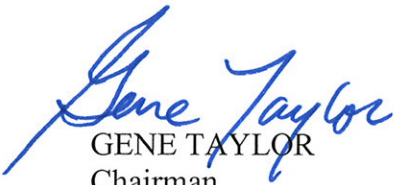
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to the Iranians, or any other potential foe, what will and will not be tolerated in the areas surrounding our warships.

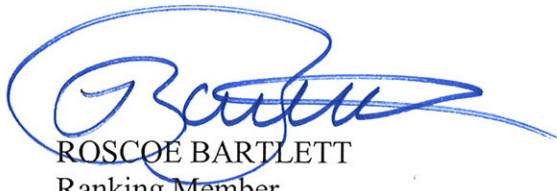


IKE SKELTON
Chairman

Very truly yours,



GENE TAYLOR
Chairman
Subcommittee on Seapower
and Expeditionary Forces



ROSCOE BARTLETT
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Seapower
and Expeditionary Forces

IS/DH/GT/RB: wae

CC: Secretary Robert Gates