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The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Barbara:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding my nomination to be Secretary of Defense. I appreciate the opportunity to address the issues you raised and to clarify my views on matters of such importance. As I answer each of your questions, please be assured that I support President Obama's position on all of these issues, and have told him so.

Per your questions on my policy regarding Iran, including whether I support efforts by the United States to impose unilateral sanctions on Iran, I appreciate the opportunity to share my views with you. I have long supported economic sanctions that are applied in concert with allies and partners. I strongly supported the Obama Administration's approach which has brought to bear unprecedented multilateral sanctions on Iran, including UN Council Resolution 1929. Regarding unilateral sanctions, I have told the President I completely support his policy on Iran. I agree that with Iran's continued rejection of diplomatic overtures, further effective sanctions, both multilateral and unilateral – may be necessary and I will support the President.

You asked if I believe that the United States should continue to encourage the European Union to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. I have always believed that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization and often stated so in my 2008 book and in many public remarks. On the Senate floor in July 2006, I condemned Hezbollah as terrorists and spoke out in favor of Israel's right to defend itself, as I have done on many occasions. In a February 2007 speech at University of Nebraska, I was unequivocal, "Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism and provides material support to Hezbollah, Hamas and other terrorist groups."

In the same July 2006 Senate remarks where I condemned Hezbollah as terrorists and supported Israel's right to self-defense, I also spoke about the importance of another American friend, the Government of Lebanon. I have always been supportive of a strong U.S.-Israel strategic relationship and always supported Israel's right to defend itself against attack. In addition to my Senate floor speeches, I spoke at the Brookings Institution in July 2006 stating that Israel has an "undeniable right to defend itself against aggression" and I reaffirmed our commitment to defending Israel, calling the bilateral relationship "a special and historic one." I declared, "Hezbollah is a threat to Israel, Lebanon, and to all who strive for lasting peace in the Middle East." In 2006, Israel was defending itself, confronting non-state elements located inside

Lebanon that conducted attacks on Israel. These attacks were not perpetrated by the Lebanese Government, which remains an important partner to the United States. The costs borne by the Lebanese people during the 2006 conflict ignited by Hezbollah are a reminder that Hezbollah is a threat to Israel and Lebanon alike.

As to my use of the phrase "Jewish lobby" to describe those who advocate for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, I've acknowledged that this was a very poor choice of words. I've said so publicly and I regret saying it. I used that terminology only once, in an interview. I recognize that this kind of language can be construed as anti-Israel. I know the pro-Israel lobby is comprised of both Jewish and non-Jewish Americans. In the Senate, I was a strong supporter of Defense appropriations, which provided enduring support for Israel's security. Most Americans, myself included, are overwhelmingly supportive of a strong U.S.-Israel strategic and security relationship. This broad support comes from both Jews and non-Jews alike.

America's relationship with Israel is one that is fundamentally built on our nations shared values, common interests, and democratic ideals. The Middle East is undergoing dramatic and historic changes, ones which surround Israel with tremendous uncertainty. We are working together daily, hand-in-hand, in unprecedented ways to counter old, new, and emerging mutual threats. I fully intend to expand the depth and breadth of U.S.-Israel cooperation.

You asked if I would support the complete repeal of the discriminatory "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. I fully support the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010 and value the service of all those who fight for our country. I know firsthand the profound sacrifice our service members and their families make, and if confirmed as Secretary of Defense, I will do everything possible to the extent permissible under current law to provide equal benefits to the families of all our service members.

Regarding your questions on the full implementation of all recent policies and procedures announced by Secretary Panetta to combat sexual assault in the military, I want you to know that I am committed to the full implementation of all recent policies and procedures announced by Secretary Panetta to combat sexual assault in the military. I will ensure Department-wide programs that support the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office have all necessary resources to meet their mission. I will meet with you and other Senators to discuss this very important issue.

You asked if I would work with Congress and the President to ensure that our female service members are afforded the same reproductive health care options as women in the civilian population. I assure you that I will fully implement all laws protecting women service member's reproductive rights. I look forward to working with Congress and the President to ensure female service members continue to be afforded world class health care, including reproductive health care. My goal is to ensure the health care provided to our service members remains contemporary with the care provided to the private citizens of our nation.

Thank you again for contacting me regarding these issues of national security and the health of our service men and women. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on these matters.

Sincerely,

