CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

May 26, 2010

Dear Mr. McKeon:

As a follow-up to our phone call today, the following represents my personal views about the proposed amendment concerning section 654 of title 10, United States Code.

I testified in February about the importance of the comprehensive review that began in March and is now well underway within the Department of Defense. We need this review to fully assess our force and carefully examine potential impacts of a change in the law. I have spoken with Sailors and fellow flag officers alike about the importance of conducting the review in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. Our Sailors and their families need to clearly understand that their voices will be heard as part of the review process, and I need their input to develop and provide my best military advice.

I share the view of Secretary Gates that the best approach would be to complete the DOD review before there is any legislation to change the law. My concern is that legislative changes at this point, regardless of the precise language used, may cause confusion on the status of the law in the Fleet and disrupt the review process itself by leading Sailors to question whether their input matters. Obtaining the views and opinions of the force and assessing them in light of the issues involved will be complicated by a shifting legislative backdrop and its associated debate.

Sincerely,

G. ROUGHEAD
Admiral, U.S. Navy

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0000