

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2015

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our concern over the future of U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. As you know, Cuban President Raul Castro recently told the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States that it would not be possible for Cuba to normalize relations with the United States until we transfer this critical military asset to Cuba. These demands should be rejected, and the United States should maintain control of this base for the foreseeable future.

As you know, there has been significant debate over the future of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. While we believe the facility is an important asset in combating global terrorism, debate over its future should not confuse the vital role the Naval Station serves in U.S. military operations. Then Commander of United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) General Douglas Fraser told the House Armed Services Committee in 2012, "Absent a detention facility and even following the eventual demise of the Castro regime, the strategic capability provided by U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay remains essential for executing national priorities throughout the Caribbean, Latin America, and South America."

Retired Admiral James Stavridis, another former SOUTHCOM Commander, wrote recently, "Guantanamo Bay Naval Station has immense strategic value ...It is the logistic, planning, surveillance, and basing linchpin for the U.S. Fourth Fleet, crucial to the military for disaster relief, humanitarian work, medical diplomacy, and counter-narcotics, all key missions for the U.S. Navy in Latin America and the Caribbean. The U.S. should do all in its power to maintain its legal control over the base."

We share the views of these former SOUTHCOM Commanders, and welcome the fact that Assistant Secretary of State Roberta Jacobson recently testified to the House Foreign Affairs Committee that the return of Guantanamo is "not on the table in these conversations" with the Castro regime. However, Assistant Secretary Jacobson also noted that she is "not a high enough ranking person to know...whether it could be in the future."

We therefore remain very concerned that your Administration may enter into negotiations over the future of U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay without consulting Congress. After all, less than a month before your announced policy shift with Cuba, top official Antony Blinken testified that any future changes to the Administration's Cuba policy "would be done in full consultation" with Congress. Of course, that did not happen. When it comes to this critical military asset, we ask that the Administration refrain from negotiating the status of Naval Station Guantanamo Bay with the Castro regime. We appreciate your consideration of our strongly held views on this matter of significant importance to United States national security.

Sincerely,



EDWARD R. ROYCE
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee



WILLIAM M. "MAC" THORNBERRY
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee