

December 21, 2012

We write regarding the qualifications of former Senator Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense. As former Generals and Admirals from the Army, Air Force, Marines and Navy, we are certain that Senator Hagel would be a strong leader in the Pentagon.

Senator Hagel is eminently qualified for the job. He is a decorated Vietnam veteran, a successful businessman, a leader in Ronald Reagan's Veteran's Administration and, since his election to the Senate in 1996, one of the country's leading voices on foreign policy. He would bring a long-term strategic vision to the job and to the President's Cabinet.

Senator Hagel has stood up for what he believes are best interests of the United States for many years, regardless of party or politics. We all know that the next Secretary of Defense will have a challenging job to do – in this time of budget constraint and unprecedented challenges around the world, the leadership of the Department of Defense must be strong. But, as then-Senator Hagel said to his colleagues on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2007: "If you want a safe job, go sell shoes."

Most importantly, we believe that the person who can best lead the Pentagon is one who understands the importance of the challenges that our warfighter faces. Everyone in the Department of Defense, from the most-recently enlisted Privates to the senior General Officers, respect his service to his country on the battlefields in Vietnam. Even more, his decades of work with Veterans organizations show that he will forcefully advocate for continued support to the men and women of our armed forces long after they have returned from today's battlefields.

We look forward to working with Senator Hagel if and when he is nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Senator Hagel has been a voice of moderation and balance in an unbalanced time, and we can think of few people better qualified to lead the Department of Defense.

Sincerely,

Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.) former National Security Advisor to Presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush

Admiral William J. Fallon, USN (Ret.), former Commander of U.S. Central Command and U.S. Pacific Command

General Lester L. Lyles, USAF (Ret.) former Commander, Air Force Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base

Admiral Robert J. Natter, USN (Ret.), former Commander of U.S. Atlantic Fleet/Fleet Forces Command

General Chuck Wald, USAF (Ret.), former Deputy Commander of United States European Command

General Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.), former Commander in Chief of United States Central Command

Lieutenant General John "Glad" Castellaw, USMC (Ret.), former Chief of Staff of United States Central Command

Lieutenant General Daniel Christman, USA (Ret.), former Superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point

Lieutenant General Robert G. Gard, Jr., USA, (Ret.), former President of the National Defense University

Brigadier General Stephen Cheney, USMC (Ret.), former Inspector General of the Marine Corps

Brigadier General Dr. John H. Johns, USA (Ret.), former Assistant Commander of the 1st Infantry Division and Professor of National Security Strategy at the National Defense University