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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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BRIAN GARRETT, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

July 12, 2024

The Honorable Christine Wormuth  
Secretary of the Army  
101 Army Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Secretary Wormuth,

We write today to express our outrage at a Directorate of Emergency Services (DES) training held at Fort Liberty that characterized pro-life organizations as “terrorist groups.” The training labeled several prominent and well-respected pro-life groups as violent extremists. The training also indicated the members of these organizations are threats to the safety of military installations and designated symbols of pro-life groups, including state-issued pro-life license plates, as indicators of terrorism. This is truly shocking for an organization that insists on treating everyone with “dignity and respect.”

This disturbing training confirmed our fears about the recent publication of Army Directive 2024-07 (Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities). That is, the Army is utilizing an overly broad policy to police the speech of conservative servicemembers, quiet dissent, and require servicemembers who believe in conservative ideals to hide their identities for fear of retaliation from their commands. But because the Army has yet to provide the training materials to Congress in contravention of their obligation, we can only assume that the training interpreted the Army’s definition of extremist activities to include pro-life organizations as “advocating or engaging in unlawful force or violence to achieve goals that are political, religious, or discriminatory or ideological in nature.” The Army’s repeated statements before Congress and the public that all viewpoints, including conservative viewpoints, are welcome, are belied not only by this policy, but also, by this is training.

Even more disturbing is who this training was conducted for: 47 uniformed soldiers tasked with guarding the access points for Fort Liberty, one of the Army’s largest military installations. Training the installation gate guards to ensure that servicemembers and their families who have pro-life license plates should be considered suspicious and possible terroristic threats to the installation, is not only absurd but dangerous. Young soldiers trained to treat certain state-issued license plates as a terrorist threat heightens the risk that they will be involved in a needlessly confrontational situation with otherwise permissible drivers accessing Fort Liberty. Disturbingly, it also requires soldiers at the gate to profile conservatives for their

political leanings.

It is crucial that our military maintains political neutrality and respect for diverse viewpoints within the bounds of the law. Regardless of any base commanders' concern for protests from potential groups, the idea that such protected constitutional activities by lawful organizations qualifies them as terrorists is absurd. We urge the Army to immediately issue a correction to all servicemembers who received this briefing, to implement rules to ensure officials do not make similar claims in the Army's name in the future, and to discipline those individuals responsible for spreading such false and divisive claims. Additionally, the Army must reassess Army Directive 2024-07, to ensure that certain conservative and religious beliefs that are outside the progressive left ideology popular in military leadership, are not swept in as extremist activity for "advocating or engaging in unlawful force or violence to achieve goals that are political, religious, or discriminatory or ideological in nature."

With these concerns in mind, we request answers to the following questions by no later than July 25, 2024:

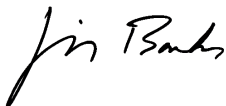
1. What was the extent of the Directorate of Emergency Services leadership's involvement in creating the presentation? Was this presentation approved by Directorate leadership? If not, who approved it?
2. Fort Liberty's statement claims that the slides were not "vetted by the appropriate approval authorities." Who were the appropriate approval authorities in this situation?
3. What are the processes in place for reviewing and approving the content of such briefings? And why were they not followed in this situation?
4. How long has Fort Liberty utilized these particular slides? How long has the Army utilized the standard deck of slides?
5. Where else have these altered slides been used? Have any other organizations within the Army utilized an altered deck of slides for their training?
6. Can you confirm that the Army has reviewed and approved all anti-terrorism guidance and training? Can you verify that none of this guidance and training violates, or encourages service members to violate, constitutionally protected speech?
7. Does the Army or Fort Liberty officials have any plans to issue a correction or disavowal to those service members who attended this briefing to instruct them that these pro-life organizations are not terrorist groups?
8. What is the Army's process of categorizing civilian advocacy of constitutionally protected activities?
9. Does the Army consider participating in pro-life advocacy, or abortion-related counseling

(sidewalks and crisis centers) in proximity to military installations to be terrorist activity?

10. Fort Liberty's statement claims that future slides will be reviewed to "ensure they align with the current DoD anti-terrorism guidance." What groups does the current anti-terrorism guidance consider to be terrorist groups or other threats to base security?

The Committee on Armed Services, under Rule X, clause 1 of the Rules of the House of Representatives ("House Rules"), maintains oversight jurisdiction over the Department of Defense generally. Moreover, under the House Rules, the Committee on Armed Services derives its authority to conduct oversight from, among other things, clause 2(b)(1) of Rule X (relating to general oversight responsibilities), clause 3(b) of Rule X (relating to special oversight functions), and clause 1(b) of rule XI (relating to investigations and studies).

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your prompt response.



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Jim Banks  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Military Personnel



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Mike Rogers  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee



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Richard Hudson  
Member  
House of Representatives



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Joe Wilson  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



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Mike Turner  
Member  
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House Armed Services Committee



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House Armed Services Committee



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Elise Stefanik  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



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Scott DesJarlais  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



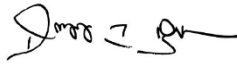
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Trent Kelly  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



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Matt Gaetz  
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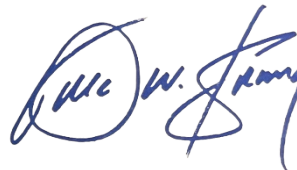
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Carlos Gimenez  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



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Brad Finstad  
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House Armed Services Committee



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Jen Kiggans  
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Cory Mills  
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Rich McCormick  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



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Clay Higgins  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee

cc: The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee

The Honorable Andy Kim  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Military Personnel