

Office of Donald Rumsfeld

July 26, 2007

**The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6143**

**The Honorable Tom Davis
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6143**

Dear Chairman Waxman and Congressman Davis:

I write in response to your letter of July 13, 2007, inviting me to testify before your Committee at a hearing scheduled for August 1, 2007. Although I will be out of the city on that date, I do welcome the opportunity to respond to your request for information concerning the death of U.S. Army Corporal Patrick Tillman.

First, I wish to again extend my deepest sympathies to the Tillman family, as I did in my letter to the family dated May 3, 2004. Theirs is the grief shared by the thousands of others whose sons and daughters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers have given their lives in our nation's service. And it is the grief shared by all who have had the solemn duty and privilege of working alongside those in uniform. Words cannot fill the void that those losses have created in the lives of their families and loved ones. The valor of Corporal Tillman's decision to step forward and volunteer for service to our nation was an example for all. It remains so today.

The handling of the circumstances surrounding Corporal Tillman's death could only have added to the pain of losing a loved one. And certainly I personally, and all connected with the Department of Defense, extend our deep regrets.

I have always believed that the American people -- and particularly the military families who sacrifice so much -- deserve the truth. In March 2002, as the then-Secretary of Defense, I wrote a memo for Department of Defense employees entitled "Principles for the Department of Defense." The very first principle was:

"Do nothing that could raise questions about the credibility of DoD. DoD officials must tell the truth and must be believed to be telling the truth or our important work is undermined."

Mr. Chairman and Congressman Davis, in your invitation, you asked that I discuss how I learned of the circumstances surrounding Corporal Tillman's death, when I learned of it and with whom I discussed it. I will, to the best of my ability, respond to your request.

In December of 2006, I sent a letter to the Acting Inspector General of the Department of Defense, Mr. Thomas Gimble, describing my best recollection of those events, which had occurred approximately 32 months before. A copy of my letter is attached. I would like to quote part of it:

"I am told that I received word of this development sometime after May 20, 2004, but my recollection reflects the fact that it occurred well over two years ago. As a result, I do not recall when I first learned about the possibility that Corporal Tillman's death might have resulted from fratricide. I am confident that I did not discuss this matter with anyone outside the Department of Defense."

What I wrote in December of 2006 remains my best recollection today of when I was informed, and whom I talked with, before May 20, 2004. I understand that the May 20, 2004, date was shortly before the Tillman family was informed of the circumstances on May 26, 2004.

Your letter also asked about my knowledge of a "Personal For" or "P-4" message dated April 29, 2004. That message was not addressed to me. I do not recall seeing it. I am told that Acting Inspector General Gimble testified to this Committee in April of this year that "the addressees on the P-4 were the three generals, and you know, I can't explain why they chose not to move that up."

That is what I recall regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of Corporal Tillman.

I understand that the Acting Inspector General's report concluded that there were some "critical errors" and raised questions about the judgment of some of those responsible for the handling of matters surrounding Corporal Tillman's death. The Tillmans were owed the truth -- unvarnished and delivered in a forthright and timely manner. And the Department owed it to the memory of a man who sacrificed his life serving his country.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this information.

Sincerely,



Donald Rumsfeld

K.U.

Enclosure



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

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Mr. Thomas Gimble
Acting Inspector General
for Department of Defense
400 Army Navy Drive
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Gimble:

I understand that you have requested my recollection of the manner in which I learned of the details involving the tragic death of Corporal Patrick Tillman.

I am told that I received word of this development sometime after May 20, 2004, but my recollection reflects the fact that it occurred well over two years ago. As a result, I do not recall when I first learned about the possibility that Corporal Tillman's death might have resulted from fratricide. I am confident that I did not discuss this matter with anyone outside of the Department of Defense.

I trust that this information will be of assistance as you conclude your review. I hope your review brings some additional element of closure for friends and family of this courageous young man. I appreciate the effort that you and your team have devoted to this matter.

Sincerely,

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