



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

FEB 16 2016

The Honorable Tom Cotton  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cotton:

Thank you for your letter dated November 20, 2015, regarding the transfer of Shaker Aamer from the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to the custody and control of the Government of the United Kingdom on October 30, 2015.

As with all decisions to transfer detainees from Guantanamo to foreign countries, I took seriously my responsibility to determine whether the transfer of Shaker Aamer to the United Kingdom was in the national security interest of the United States. Prior to the transfer, I consulted with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other national security principals, a practice I will continue to use for future transfers.

Based on my discussions with Chairman Dempsey, I understood that he had some concerns that Shaker Aamer might reengage in terrorist activity after his transfer to the United Kingdom. Although I share concerns about the reengagement of any detainee in terrorist activities, taking into considerations the security assurances that would be provided by the United Kingdom, I determined that transferring Shaker Aamer to the United Kingdom was in the national security interest of the United States. The Government of the United Kingdom is one of our strongest and most capable counterterrorism partners and our closest ally, and senior U.K. officials provided their commitment to applying stringent security measures to substantially reduce the risks posed by this transfer.

With respect to the press release concerning Shaker Aamer, it stated that the Guantanamo Review Task Force – the Task Force established in 2009 in accordance with Executive Order 13492 that included the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Justice, and State, and the Offices of the Director of National Intelligence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – unanimously designated Shaker Aamer as eligible for transfer, subject to appropriate security measures and other conditions. This language correctly reflects a decision made by the Task Force in 2009 and was consistent with the press releases issued for previous detainee transfers.

Thank you for your attention regarding this matter. I am sending identical letters to the other senators who joined you in signing your letter. The Department is available to address any additional questions you may have regarding this transfer and other Guantanamo transfer matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ash Carter", is located at the bottom right of the page.