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June 19, 2012

The Honorable John McHugh
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Army
1600 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Secretary McHugh:

We write to request clarification on your leave policy for Army National Guard (ARNG) soldiers currently deployed in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and other contingency operations. Our offices have received correspondence from families of New York National Guard members detailing the confusion over whether or not their loved ones would receive Rest and Recuperation (R&R) leave during their most recent deployment.

According to family members of the 108th Infantry Brigade of the 27th Brigade Combat Team with the New York Army National Guard, when their loved ones were sent to Kuwait in January 2012, they were told that they would not receive R&R leave during their deployment. However, when they arrived in Kuwait they were informed that they would indeed receive time to travel home to be with their families. Many of these soldiers immediately began to schedule trips and pay deposits for their vacations, but then were informed days later that they would no longer be permitted to go home. Again, in May the service members were told they would receive leave, only to be informed in June that they would not.

Last summer, the Army announced that it would reduce deployments for active duty forces to nine-months starting in January, 2012. While ANRG deployment would remain nine-months, in the same statement the Army said that soldiers would no longer receive morale leave. However, commanders could still grant emergency or special circumstance leave time if the situation called for it. Unfortunately, it was unclear how this policy would affect the ARNG.

We know that the Army always considers the needs of the soldiers and their families when making these decisions, but it appears that there is some confusion over the Army's current

leave policy and its implementation, especially how it affects National Guard Soldiers. We respectfully request clarification of the Department's current rest and recuperation leave policy and an explanation of how this policy takes into consideration the additional time away from their families that National Guard Soldiers units incur due to mobilization prior to a deployment and de-mobilization post-deployment. We respectfully encourage you to make every effort possible look into their situation to ensure a desirable outcome for these Soldiers and their families.

Sincerely,



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



Kathleen C. Hochul
Member of Congress