

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 18, 2012

The Honorable Leon Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Panetta,

I am writing in regards to the revocation of leave that was promised to Detachment 1, Bravo Company of the 1/189th General Support Aviation Battalion, an aviation support unit comprised of Nevada and Montana Army National Guardsmen. My office has received numerous inquiries from constituents that this unit would be receiving Non-Chargeable Rest and Recuperation (NCR&R) leave on their return from Afghanistan and now this NCR&R has been denied.

The unit mobilized on February 27, 2012, and arrived in Ft. Hood, Texas, on March 1, 2012. Since March, the 1/189th has served in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Under the NCR&R leave program, any unit that has been deployed for at least 270 days in Iraq or Afghanistan will receive 15 days of leave that will not be charged to their normal leave account.

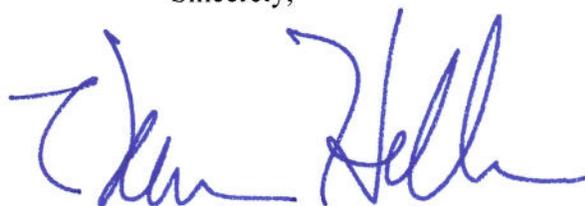
The 1/189th's orders specified a start date of April 20, 2012, in Afghanistan with their scheduled departure date on February 21, 2013, which puts them over the 270 day requirement. However, the unit is now being told that they will not be given this leave because they could possibly receive a replacement unit sometime between January 10, 2013, and February 17, 2013. The 270 day deployment date should not begin once the unit is in country, but rather when they report for duty for the mission, which in the case of the 1/189th was on February 27, 2012.

It is my understanding that there are several other Chinook helicopter units currently serving with the 1/189th who also do not know when their replacement date is set for, but they have received their promised NCR&R leave. I respectfully request that you provide me the reason for the conflicting leave status for these two units.

As you know, the NCR&R program allows soldiers who served in combat areas much needed time to rest and recuperate after returning from stressful wartime situations. The soldiers of the 1/189th relied on this leave when they returned to spend time with their family and loved ones.

I respectfully encourage you to make every effort to look into their situation to ensure a desirable outcome. Thank you for your consideration of this request, and please do not hesitate to contact my Washington office at (202) 224-6244 if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator