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July 7, 2018

The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gowdy:

As Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on National Security, I respectfully request that you hold an oversight hearing to examine credible reports that the Department of Defense is summarily discharging noncitizen U.S. reservists and recruits who enlisted to serve our nation in the U.S. military as part of the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program.

Under the MAVNI program authorized and administered by the Department of Defense beginning in 2008 until its suspension in 2016, our military services recruited over 10,000 legally-present aliens whose skills were deemed "vital to the national interest" by their respective Service Secretary. The skills specified by the Department of Defense included medical specialties where a service had experienced a professional shortfall as well as specific foreign language skills, including Arabic, Kurdish, Urdu, Pashto, and Dari, that have proven key to supporting our U.S. and coalition military forces and operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and other key combat zones. Approved MAVNI health care professionals satisfied all existing military enlistment criteria and committed to at least three years of active duty service or six years in the Selected Reserve. MAVNI participants with eligible foreign language skills similarly committed to at least four years of active duty service. In recognition of their dedicated service to our nation, the Department of Defense authorized MAVNI participants to apply for expedited naturalization and U.S. citizenship upon receipt of an honorable service designation. In 2012, the U.S. Army awarded MAVNI participant Sgt. Saral K. Shrestha, born and raised in Kathmandu, Nepal, its *Soldier of the Year* honors following his distinguished service in Afghanistan, where he utilized his fluency in Urdu to assist U.S. Army personnel in communicating with Afghani locals and partner forces.

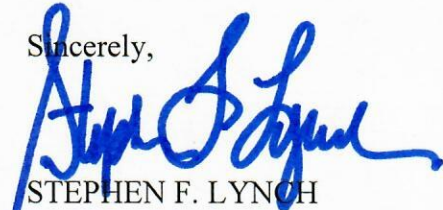
Regrettably, recent media reports indicate that the Department of Defense has not abided by the commitment that it made to these dedicated service men and women. According to *The Associated Press*, more than 40 U.S. Army reservists and recruits who enlisted in the military through the MAVNI program have been abruptly discharged with no opportunity for appeal or had their immigration status questioned. Reportedly, many of these veterans did not receive notice or the justification behind their discharges. Other MAVNI participants have reported that upon inquiry of their status, the Department of Defense informed them that they have been labeled as "security risks" given that they have relatives living abroad

or as a result of uncompleted additional background checks to be conducted by the Department of Defense.

As underscored by the Department of Defense in its description of the MAVNI program, the “*law ensures that the sacrifice of non-citizens during a time of national need is met with an opportunity for early citizenship, to recognize their contribution and sacrifice.*” An oversight hearing to examine the reported failure of the Department of Defense to abide by its commitment to MAVNI program participants would serve to better ensure that we live up to the promises made to these brave service men and women. It would also serve to further our national security and force protection operations going forward by strengthening our efforts to recognize the service of those noncitizens who enlist in the U.S. military when our national interest most demands it.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,



STEPHEN F. LYNCH

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on National Security

cc: The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform