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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

November 30, 2011

RICHARD D. DeBOES, STAFF DIRECTOR
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Mr. Mark W. Lippert
c/o Ms. Kathryn Ruemmler
Assistant to the President and Counsel
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Lippert:

Further to your testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 17, 2011 regarding your nomination by the President to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, I am writing to seek some additional information and clarifications pertaining to your background and previous experience

In several passages of his book *Obama's Wars*, published in 2010, Bob Woodward discusses your official relationship with General James L. Jones and offers a disturbing portrayal of your actions that could be described as arrogant and disloyal. Your actions while working at the NSC are an important indicator of your fundamental qualification to carry out the duties of the critically important position for which you have been nominated. While you answered several questions about Woodward's assertions at the nomination hearing, I would like to further explore this matter.

1. Describe your supervisory reporting chain within the NSC, including to whom you reported. Did you report to White House political advisors and senior staff, and if you did, to whom and how?
2. What authority did General Jones as National Security Advisor have over your official duties as Deputy National Security Advisor and NSC Chief of Staff?
3. Were you ever counseled by General Jones about your performance of duties as Deputy National Security Advisor and NSC Chief of Staff? If so, describe the matters discussed.

In *Obama's Wars*, Woodward states that General Jones referred to you and your NSC colleague, Denis McDonough, as "the Politburo," "the Mafia," and "the water bugs," and that Jones viewed you as a "giant thorn" in his side. On page 137, Woodward states that Jones viewed you and Mr. McDonough as "major obstacles" to developing and deciding on coherent national security policy.

4. Do you believe these statements to be true?
5. If so, why did General Jones describe you and Mr. McDonough in these negative terms?

6. What is your understanding of why General Jones reportedly considered you to be a "thorn" in his side with respect to his duties and the responsibilities of the NSC?

On page 139 in Woodward's book he describes an incident in 2009, during President Obama's trip to Europe, when General Jones was forbidden by you from consulting with the President. "My access was cut off," Jones is reported to have said, a highly unusual and embarrassing event, given the nature and importance of the National Security Advisor's role.

7. Is this account accurate?

8. Describe in detail your recollection of this incident, including any role you may have played in it and your interaction with Jones regarding denial of access to the President for him?

9. Were you ever authorized to control Jones's access to the President at this or any other time?

10. If so, who authorized you to do so? Do you believe that such authorization – even if given – would be appropriate?

On page 197 of Woodward's book, he states that General Jones believed you leaked derogatory and defamatory information about him to the media and undermined his position inside the White House. On page 198, Woodward discusses media reports that were harshly critical of General Jones's performance as National Security Advisor. Woodward quotes a news story on June 11, 2009, that stated: "One NSC staff member claimed that Jones is so forgetful that at times he appears to have Alzheimer's disease."

11. What knowledge do you have about this news report and the identity of the NSC staff member who reportedly made this comment about General Jones?

12. Did you ever discuss General Jones with representatives of the media?

13. If so, what was the substance of your discussion?

14. Did you authorize or direct anyone else to talk about Jones with members of the media?

15. Did you ever discuss Jones's performance as National Security Advisor, or other internal business of the NSC, with Woodward?

16. If so, describe your conversations with Woodward and provide us with any notes, copies of emails, or documents you retained in this regard.

On page 198 of Woodward's book, he states that longtime friends of General Jones told him in June 2009 that someone in the NSC staff was making numerous derogatory comments about General Jones to the media and that "his initials are M.L." Woodward reports that General Jones talked, first, to Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel, seeking your dismissal, and then, in July to the President. He states that "All seemed to agree that it was rank insubordination" and that

"Obama promised to move Lippert." On October 1, 2009, the President announced that you were leaving the NSC, and describing your departure as your choice.

17. To your knowledge, is the account of these incidents provided by Woodward accurate? If not, in what way are they inaccurate?

18. To your knowledge, did General Jones ever go to the President, to Rahm Emmanuel, or to any other White House official seeking your removal from the NSC?

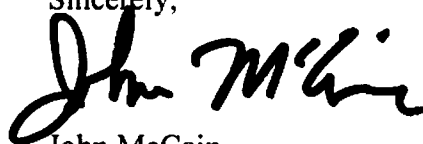
19. If so, when did you become aware of this? What action, if any, did you take?

20. Did friction and disagreements with General Jones play any role whatsoever in your decision to leave the position of Chief of Staff of the NSC in order to return to active duty in the Navy?

On page 144 of his book, Woodward goes on to say that you distrusted Lieutenant General Lute and shut him out of discussions and policy decisions on the NSC. "When Obama visited Iraq in April 2009, Woodward states, "Lippert kept Lute in the dark, practically running the trip himself from his BlackBerry."

21. Did you deliberately take steps to "shut out" General Lute from policy debates and decisions at the NSC, as Woodward describes? Is the accounting of your actions regarding General Lute by Woodward accurate? If not, please clarify for the Committee what aspects of this portrayal are not correct?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John McCain". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John McCain
Ranking Member