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52D DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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December 13, 2011

Colonel Nicholas F. Marano
Commanding Officer
Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton
PO BOX 555010
Camp Pendleton, CA 92055

Dear Colonel Marano:

As the Commanding Officer of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, it is my understanding that you will be directly involved in the decision regarding the memorial cross on the installation, originally put in place by a group of Marines to honor those who have fallen or been wounded in combat. Considering the full intent of the memorial, I want to register my strong support for keeping the cross in place.

Honoring the nation's military with symbols of faith is a tradition that is on display in national cemeteries from Fort Rosecrans to Arlington, as well as other places that pay tribute to the Armed Forces. Legal challenges against these symbols routinely create the misconception that these are monuments to religion, when in fact the purpose is to honor the men and women of the Armed Forces. These challenges are not only a disservice to our military, but they undermine generations of personal sacrifice on behalf of a nation committed to protecting individual freedom.

Specifically related to the Camp Pendleton cross, my perspective is also based on my experience as a Marine serving in 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, and the memory of the Marines honored by the memorial. These Marines—Major Douglas Zembiec, Major Ray Mendoza, Lance Corporal Aaron Austin and Lance Corporal Robert Zurheide—also served in 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, which was one of the main combat units in the fight to reclaim the city of Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004.

It was during this time that I served alongside Major Douglas Zembiec and many other Marines who gave everything they had, some of whom made the ultimate sacrifice, to return Fallujah to the Iraqi people and prompt a major turning point in the war. Honoring these and other Marines with a memorial at Camp Pendleton is a fitting tribute that represents the fighting spirit of the Marine Corps and extraordinary personal sacrifice.

As you consider this matter, which I understand is currently under review by legal authorities on base, I hope you will take the full intent of the memorial into account. Thank you

for the opportunity to register my support for the memorial and please know that I remain available to provide you with any assistance you may need.

Semper Fi.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duncan Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "D".

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress