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The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld,

I am writing to urge the Department of Defense to implement a zero tolerance policy against racist extremists serving in the armed forces. It has come to my attention that military standards designed to keep racist extremists from serving in the United States military may have been relaxed to meet manpower goals, therefore making it easier for extremists to both enter and serve in the military.

Secretary of Defense Weinberger, in 1986, stated that "military personnel must reject participation in white supremacy, neo-Nazi, and other such groups which espouse or attempt to create overt discrimination. Active participation, including public demonstrations, recruiting and training members, and organizing or leading such organizations is utterly incompatible with military service." According to research conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), thousands of soldiers across all military services are involved in extremist activities. Specifically, an account from a Department of Defense investigator cited in SPLC's research reported 320 soldiers at Fort Lewis alone are involved in extremist activity. Further, this investigator discovered an online network of 57 neo-Nazis in the Army and Marine Corps based at five military installations across the nation.

I am concerned that efforts to take action against extremists serving in our armed forces appear to be hindered by ambiguous Department of Defense guidelines and regulations on the issue. Military extremists present an elevated threat both to their fellow servicemembers and the public. We witnessed with Timothy McVeigh that today's racist extremist may become tomorrow's domestic terrorist. Of all institutions in our society, the U.S. military is the absolute last place extremists can be permitted to exist.

I look forward to discussing this critical issue with you further. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



Richard Shelby

RCS/laf