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United States Senate
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6475

October 19, 2012

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

On October 15, 2012, the Associated Press reported that "Administration officials say the White House has put special operations strike forces on standby and moved drones into the skies above Africa, ready to hit militant targets from Libya to Mali, if U.S. investigators can find the al-Qaida-linked group responsible for the death of the U.S. Ambassador in Libya." According to the AP article, these "details were provided by three current and one former administration official, as well as an analyst who was approached by the White House for help. All four spoke only on condition of anonymity." We are troubled that Administration officials appear to be publicly discussing classified matters, thereby potentially impeding the success of any action that may be taken against those responsible for the September 11, 2012, terrorist attack in Libya.

If the information in this article is accurate, it seems counterintuitive to broadcast our intent to take action as that would certainly give those responsible for this terrorist attack a chance to take evasive measures. We request that you inform the Senate Intelligence Committee and other relevant congressional committees whether the information described in the AP article is true and was authorized for disclosure to the press. If so, we ask that you provide the specific reason for the disclosure and the identity of the individual who authorized it. If the information was not authorized for disclosure, but was, in fact, "leaked" by Administration officials, we ask that you describe the steps being taken to identify these officials and refer them for criminal prosecution.

This latest disclosure raises the same concerns that compelled the Committee to take action this past summer when it included a "leaks" title within its annual intelligence authorization bill that was reported out of Committee. The Committee took this strong bipartisan action out of a growing sense that there are far too many disclosures of classified information appearing in the media, disclosures that not only compromise our intelligence sources and methods but can significantly impact important liaison relationships.

Given the significant policy and oversight issues that the actions described in this article may present, we also request that Administration officials be made immediately available to discuss with the relevant congressional committees whether there are any plans for action, including under what specific authorities such action would be conducted.

Sincerely,

Cc: Honorable Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense
Honorable David Petraeus, Director, Central Intelligence Agency
Mr. Thomas Donilon, National Security Advisor