

VERN BUCHANAN
DISTRICT 16, FLORIDA



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TRADE
HEALTH

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0916

September 22, 2015

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
U.S. House Armed Services Committee
Rayburn House Office Building
Room 2216
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee
Russell Senate Office Building
Room 228
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Thornberry and McCain:

I ask that you begin an immediate investigation into reports of a Pentagon policy under which service members have been disciplined for their effort to protect children from being raped by Afghan allies on an American military base.

Like millions of Americans, I was sickened by a report in yesterday's *New York Times* exposing this shameful practice. One soldier stationed in Afghanistan said "from his bunk in southern Afghanistan he could hear Afghan police officers sexually abusing boys they had brought to the base... at night we can hear them screaming but we're not allowed to do anything about it."

I call on your committees to determine how this policy was developed and which individuals were responsible for its implementation. Someone must be held accountable for this outrageous contravention of American values. Soldiers and Marines that protect children should be commended. The only people who should be punished are the ones who created and condoned this immoral and savage code.

Administration officials characterized this policy as "fundamentally an Afghan law enforcement matter." This is not an acceptable answer.

Regrettably, we have seen a pattern in recent years where the Administration provides information to the American people only after being pressured to do so by Congress. Whether it is the terms of the release of the so-called "Taliban Five" terrorists from Guantanamo Bay or the progress of the U.S.-led coalition in the fight against the Islamic State, it has taken rigorous oversight by your committees to reveal the truth.

I believe this policy, which condones the sort of barbarism that is reprehensible to all Americans, requires the same level of diligent oversight.

Fighting in a foreign theater should not require our service members to turn a blind eye towards sexual abuse of children. Those who wear the uniform of the U.S. military should be commended, not punished, for upholding American values.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vern Buchanan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Vern" and last name "Buchanan" clearly distinguishable.

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress