



Duncan Hunter  
U.S. House of Representatives  
50th District, California

November 23, 2015

General Mark A. Welsh III  
Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20330-1670

Dear General Welsh:

Recently brought to the attention of the Air Force was a concerning social media post involving several senior Air Force personnel, which alluded to illegal drug use—specifically acid. After my staff brought this to the attention of the Air Force—to inquire if the content of the post would require an investigation, similar to the investigation into the Laughlin pilots—Col. Sean McKenna said to the Air Force Times, “the comment by the PA member was posted in response to a friend’s comment... the 47<sup>th</sup> Flying Training Wing leadership have spoken with the individual and they are handling the matter appropriately.”

My assumption, after reviewing the post, is that the individuals involved were only joking, and each of them deserves the benefit of the doubt. However, in the case of the Laughlin pilots, for personal messages that involved the same type of banter, the pilots in question were immediately treated like criminals—even though not a shred of evidence confirmed illegal drug use by the pilots. Now, in the case of the senior personnel, why would they be treated any differently than the Laughlin pilots? I ask this especially knowing of your commitment to ensuring fair and equal treatment. Therefore, I would like to know what it means to be “handling the matter appropriately,” as Col. McKenna stated.

I would also like to know why the Air Force viewed it appropriate to immediately investigate and severely punish the Laughlin pilots, while apparently not investigating senior personnel for the same reason. Were the Laughlin pilots not joking among friends—as Col. McKenna said was the case with senior personnel? Worse yet, the Laughlin pilots were communicating on their personal cell phones, whereas senior personnel were commenting on a public forum, in violation of your own standards and policy. So, again, why would different treatment be afforded?

It is my firm belief that the Laughlin pilots should be cleared entirely and their flying status restored. It is also my belief that the senior personnel in question were joking among each other, but the Air Force should either clear both groups together or immediately move to investigate the senior personnel in question for illegal drug use and distribution. And according

to your own lawyers, any message alone, without any supporting evidence, is enough to reprimand and/or remove an individual from duty.

General Welsh, I know you are committed to resolving the case of the Laughlin pilots. And I know you are committed to avoiding the creation of a double standard, or even the appearance of one. But both of the situations that I have raised should underscore to the Air Force the magnitude of your decision in the case of the Laughlin pilots and the precedent it will set.

I eagerly await your decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops and a long horizontal tail extending to the right.

Duncan Hunter  
Member of Congress