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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

April 22, 2008

Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing in connection with a front page story in the New York Times on Sunday, April 20, 2008, entitled "Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon's Hidden Hand."

I am deeply troubled over the allegations in the story that:

- (1) retired military personnel performing media analysis were accorded special treatment by being provided with talking points and unique access to senior civilian and military officials with the expectation (usually realized) that they would provide positive analysis from the Department's perspective;
- (2) some analysts, who were accorded special treatment, were on the payroll of Defense contractors with an interest in gaining or preserving military contracts.

While the media clearly have their own shortfalls for paying people to provide "independent" analysis when they have such real and apparent conflicts, that doesn't excuse the Department's behavior in giving both special treatment and valuable access to analysts who provide commentary in favor of DoD's strategy, while not offering similar access to some other analysts and cutting off access to others who didn't deliver as expected.

I would appreciate your promptly investigating the specific allegations in the article and advising me of your findings and any actions you intend to take.

Sincerely,



Carl Levin