Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 6, 2016

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretaries Johnson and Kerry:

We write to follow up on our November 22, 2016 letter regarding the agreement between the United States and Australia for the United States to consider for admission as refugees, potentially over 2,400 migrants currently detained in Papua New Guinea and Nauru, whom Australia has refused to admit. These migrants are nationals of countries like Somalia, Syria, Pakistan, Iran, and Sudan, as well as others. As you know, your agencies have deemed the agreement classified. This is despite the fact that classification of an agreement regarding individuals to be considered for admission by the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is unprecedented.

We appreciate your making staff available to provide us with the document in a classified setting and to brief us regarding the circumstances surrounding the agreement. It is now absolutely apparent to us that there was no reason for the agreement to be classified from the outset, and that it should not continue to be classified. To that end, we request that you declassify the document outlining the agreement so that the American people can read it.

The American people have a right to be fully aware of the actions of their government regarding foreign nationals who may be admitted to the United States. American taxpayers not only foot the bill for the majority of the refugee resettlement in the United States, but they bear any consequences regarding the security implications of those admitted to the U.S.

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Please respond by December 13, 2016, with your decision as to whether or not you will declassify the U.S.-Australia refugee agreement document. If your decision is not to seek declassification, please include your justification for such decision in your response.

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Bob Goodlatte
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary