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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

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February 22, 2016

### **Via Electronic Transmission**

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter:

I am writing to raise questions about why the Director of Naval Intelligence, Vice Admiral Ted N. Branch, remains at his post even though he has not possessed the required security clearances for over two years.

Navy leadership and the Defense Department (DoD) Central Adjudication Facility (CAF) reportedly “pulled” Admiral Branch’s security clearances in November 2013 when he was implicated in a widespread corruption investigation of a Singapore-based company that re-supplied U.S. Navy ships in Asian ports. According to press reports, the investigation is being conducted by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and Justice Department.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Secretary, I do not understand how Admiral Branch can still occupy such a sensitive position with no security clearance. Under normal circumstances, large quantities of highly classified information routinely flows into and around the office of the Director of Naval Intelligence. Without the proper clearances, how could Admiral Branch possibly perform the duties and responsibilities of that office? Having the appropriate clearances should be a requirement for being the Director of Naval Intelligence. As long as he sits at the Director’s desk, inadvertent and unauthorized access to classified information could occur.

And with the DoD CAF involved, which is notoriously slow in resolving such matters, Admiral Branch’s clearance is not apt to be restored anytime soon.

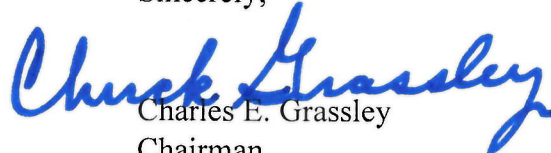
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<sup>1</sup> Craig Whitlock, “The Admiral in charge of Navy Intelligence has not been allowed to see military secrets for years,” *Washington Post*, January 28, 2016;

For these reasons, I would appreciate having a full explanation as to why Admiral Branch is being allowed to remain in this very important and sensitive post. Common sense tells me that the decision to leave a senior admiral, who was stripped of his clearances, in charge Naval Intelligence operations in the midst of the global war on terror needs top-level scrutiny now. A response is requested by March 7, 2016.

Your cooperation with this inquiry would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is stylized with a large "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

Charles E. Grassley

Chairman

Committee on the Judiciary