



CONCERNED  
VETERANS  
FOR AMERICA.

15 December 2021

Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

We are writing to request that you order a new review of the 4 October 2017 ambush of American soldiers at Tongo Tongo, Niger. While our two organizations take opposing positions on many issues, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder on two principles: First, that our elected leaders must do more to avoid committing our armed forces to open-ended wars with ill-defined goals; and second, families of fallen Americans deserve transparency when it comes to what happened to their loved ones.

As you know that ambush, which claimed the lives of four Americans, is under new scrutiny because of an in-depth documentary from ABC News, "3212 UNREDACTED."

While we would not presume to know all the facts surrounding the operation, the documentary raises disturbing new questions regarding the integrity of the investigation performed after the ambush. Americans and the families of the fallen deserve a new investigation, the findings of which cannot be questioned.

Specifically concerning to us is that the investigation was performed by United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), under the command of Gen. Thomas Waldhauser. That investigation seemed more interested in protecting senior leadership -- and pinning blame on junior officers on the ground -- than producing a complete and objective account.

A new review of the ambush is necessary and should be performed by those with no interest or responsibility in the region, and with no connection to anyone involved in the operation, at any level. Simply put, it should be completely independent.

A new investigation is also justified given the recent recovery of 45 minutes of helmet camera footage from the battle. The American public and the families of the fallen, in particular, deserve a comprehensive and objective investigation that takes this new evidence into account.

If new findings warrant, we urge you to review and reconsider both general officer memoranda of reprimand and valor awards.

This request comes with precedent, as you recently ordered a review of another investigation under AFRICOM—the 5 January 2020, al-Shabaab attack in Manda Bay, Kenya. We hope you will find the ambush at Tongo Tongo similarly worth a new review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P. D. Eaton".

Major General Paul D. Eaton  
U.S. Army, Ret.  
Senior Advisor, VoteVets

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Russ Duerstine".

Russ Duerstine  
USAF Veteran  
Deputy Director, Concerned Veterans for America