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COMMITTEES:

ARMED SERVICES

EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

August 14, 2006

Mark S. Zaid, Esquire  
Attorney At Law  
1920 N Street NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Zaid,

Today, I want to express my sincere apology to the Marines of the 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, and especially SSgt Frank D. Wuterich. On November 19, 2005, in Haditha, Iraq, they were involved in an incident that resulted in the deaths of Iraqi civilians. Some news outlets have promoted incomplete statements attributed to me that gave the false impression that I have concluded those involved committed unlawful acts.

I am, of course, very concerned regarding any allegations surrounding misconduct by U.S. troops in Iraq. Such allegations must be taken seriously, but we should never rush to judgment before all the facts are known and the military criminal justice process is completed. In my capacity as a Member of the House Armed Services Committee, I received preliminary briefings from Brigadier General John F. Kelly, who currently serves as the Legislative Assistant to the Commandant of the Marines. I want to stress, however, that at the time I received these briefings the official investigations were not complete. Conclusions have not been reached.

As a retired Colonel in the U.S. Marines, I am especially proud of the sacrifices our men and women make day in and day out, especially in combat situations. And as a Marine Officer I would never want to publicly insinuate, implicitly or explicitly, that I have prejudged what took place that day on the battlefield or afterwards. I have the utmost faith that the Defense Department is fully investigating the matter and the appropriate decisions will be reached. Should charges be brought against these Marines, and I do not know if they will be, the involved Marines deserve to be considered absolutely innocent until proven guilty.

Should you have further questions regarding this issue, please feel free to contact me directly at (202) 225-2271.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Kline".

John Kline  
Member of Congress