

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

October 25, 2017

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On October 4, 2017, four U.S. service members died and two more were severely injured during an operation in Niger.¹ These are the first combat-related American deaths in the course of the U.S. Special Forces training and assistance to the Nigerien armed forces.² Nearly three weeks after the attack, many questions remain regarding the purpose of the operation, the circumstances surrounding the ambush, and the military response to the tragedy.

The Committee has a history of investigating certain deaths of U.S. servicemen killed in the line of duty, in addition to the Committee on Armed Services and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.³ The Committee plays a unique role in conducting interagency oversight in the House, and has jurisdiction over management of government operations generally and intergovernmental affairs.

We request you provide a briefing regarding the Niger attack to all Committee Members as soon as possible. Please allow ample time for questions from Members during this briefing. Please contact Carlton Davis of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5074 to schedule a briefing as soon as possible. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Trey Gowdy

Elijah E. Cummings

cc: The Honorable William "Mac" Thornberry, Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
The Honorable Adam Smith, Ranking Member, Committee on Armed Services
The Honorable Devin Nunes, Chairman, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
The Honorable Adam B. Schiff, Ranking Member Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

¹ Eric Schmitt, *3 Special Forces Troops Killed and 2 Are Wounded in an Ambush in Niger*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 4, 2017), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/04/world/africa/special-forces-killed-niger.html>.

² *Id.*

³ See, e.g. H. Rep. 110-858, *Misleading Information From the Battlefield: The Tillman and Lynch Episodes*, available at <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/110th-congress/house-report/858/1>, and *Benghazi: Exposing Failure and Recognizing Courage: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform 113th Cong.* (2013).