

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 5, 2007

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am deeply concerned by reports that no actions have been taken by the Department of Defense to minimize the use of stop loss orders.

Stop loss -- which blocks members of the Armed Services from retiring or completing their contracts as scheduled -- undermines confidence in military leadership, compromises recruitment efforts, and, most importantly, places a tremendous additional strain on members of the military and their families.

A widely publicized memorandum you sent on January 19th 2007 to military department secretaries, undersecretaries of defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff explicitly set a February 28th 2007 deadline for the submission of plans to minimize Stop Loss for active and Reserve component forces. Since the President was already actively pursuing his surge strategy when this memo was sent, your memorandum contemplated a reduction in the use of stop loss could be achieved even as troop levels in Iraq increased.

Your pledge to minimize stop loss fueled the hopes of our troops and their families. The hard deadline you set for the submission of minimization plans reinforced military families' confidence in you. They believed you would promptly follow through on their behalf and curtail the use of stop loss.

I understand that the stop loss minimization plans you requested were submitted on a timely basis, but no actions have been taken to implement them. Instead, senior level officials are reportedly continuing to evaluate next steps.

As troubling as this delay would be, it appears that the lag between your memo and actual action will stretch even further. At a hearing in June before the Armed Services

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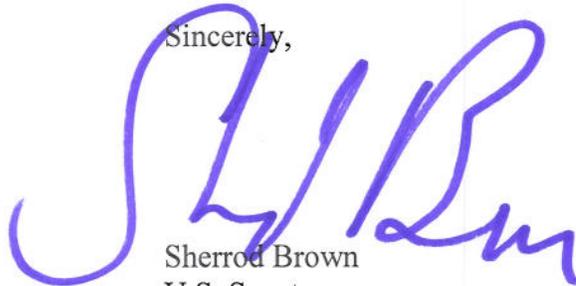
Committee, Army Secretary Pete Geren testified as follows: "And I have tasked the Army to come up with a plan to work us out of stop loss, to come with alternatives, to come up with incentives."

I would appreciate clarification from you on this point: if the Army submitted a stop loss minimization plan to you in February, why was that branch working to develop a stop loss minimization plan in June?

Nearly two months after Secretary Geren's testimony and a full seven months after your original promise, there is still no firm stop loss minimization policy in place. This string of delays is a disservice to our men and women in uniform who have served bravely in Iraq, many on multiple tours. These stop loss orders have a corrosive effect on families and on military recruitment. You must honor your pledge to minimize their use.

Please let me know when your plan to minimize stop loss will be in place.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator