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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0909

February 29, 2012

The Honorable Leon Panetta
Secretary
Department of Defense
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Secretary Panetta:

It has come to our attention that the United States has recently constructed a new recreation yard for detainees being held at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base. It has been reported that this recreation yard will include such amenities as a new soccer field, a walking trail, and exercise equipment.

I am sure that we can agree that in these difficult budgetary times, we must ensure that vital defense funds are not spent frivolously and are used in a manner that enhances the security of the United States. During these tight budgetary and economic times, it is difficult to be anything but dismayed by this news. While the Administration's recent proposal for its Fiscal Year 2013 defense budget reflects a reduction in military spending and our troops still engage in combat in Afghanistan, it is curious that the federal government has managed to spend nearly a million taxpayer dollars for the comfort and relaxation of detainees who are accused of posing a real risk of injury to our country and people. At best, this construction of a new recreation facility appears incredibly tone deaf.

This incident raises serious questions about the current Administration's oversight of taxpayer dollars. In light of these concerns, I would appreciate an immediate response to the following questions:

1. Was your office aware that new recreational facilities for Guantanamo Bay detainees were being constructed?
2. What was the impetus for the construction of the new recreation facility? What authority approved its construction?
3. How will you work to ensure that future defense dollars are not squandered on construction or purchases that do not enhance the security of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base?
4. What resources and mechanisms does the Department of Defense have to track wasteful spending?

Sincerely,



GUS BILIRAKIS
Member of Congress