



Office of Montel B. Williams

August 20, 2014

The Honorable Enrique Peña Nieto
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His Excellency Eduardo Medina-Mora
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Re: Sgt. Andrew P. Tahmooressi, USMC

VIA EMAIL AND FEDERAL EXPRESS AS NOTED

Dear Mr. President, Mr. Attorney General and Mr. Ambassador:

I write to you in regards to Sergeant Tahmooressi's ongoing criminal proceeding in Mexico. Want to say clearly at the outset that I respect the laws of your Country and Mexico's sovereign right to enforce them. Needless to say I am well aware of the basis for Mexico's gun laws and I'm keenly aware the flow of weapons to the cartels often comes from the United States and believe that your Government's fight against the cartels is absolutely a fight against terrorism. And I am aware that Americans often behave as if Mexican law does not apply to them. Finally, I realize entirely the current situation on our border has resulted in strong opinions and anger on both sides of the border resulting in a challenging political climate.

However, I don't write you about any of those realities. Before I began my show, I served in both the Marines and the Navy for 22 years and am a graduate of the United States Naval Academy. It is against that backdrop that I write you about one 26-year old young man who served his country with distinction and unfortunately, as so many have, returned from war with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I am sure you have seen news coverage of the recently revealed systemic problems at our Veteran's Administration – it's clear that Sgt. Tahmooressi may not have received the excellent care to which his distinguished service entitled him. In our country, *statistics reveal that an average of 22 Veterans of the United States Armed Forces take their lives every day as the proximate*

result of PTSD. That number is staggering. In my view the evidence that Sgt. Tahmooressi suffers from PTSD and that his is severe is indisputable.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a very real condition that manifests itself differently in each individual afflicted. In a significant sense, soldiers with PTSD never truly leave the battlefield, and they struggle with symptoms like hyper-vigilance, memory and cognition lapses and depression. The signs of PTSD are obvious in Sergeant Tahmooressi's case: minor physical confrontations, anxiety, elevated fight or flight (as if constantly under threat of attack), and an inability to cope with the sudden onset of stress. In fact, the incident in question occurred just days after he was evaluated as a crisis walk-in at San Diego's VA Hospital and conclusively diagnosed with PTSD.

His actions that fateful evening suggest the presence of PTSD: an inability to make quick decisions, confusion and rash behavior. If in fact allegations of aggression towards the border guards, the escape attempt and the suicide attempt are true, it paints a picture of a young man with a serious mental health condition.

Respectfully, I have grave concerns about the conditions of his confinement, before and after his move to El Hongo II prison in Tecate. It is evident that little was done to assure his safety when he was placed into General Population. I would argue that the result was inevitable because he had a proverbial "bull's eye" on him as a United States Marine.

I respectfully request that Mexico take its obligation to ensure his safety and well-being with the utmost seriousness. I also believe that, even with the necessary professionals on hand (which I understand they are not), it is impossible to address his mental health needs in a correctional setting. In my view, the lack of care and utter failure of correctional officials to properly ensure his safety violate basic human rights.

While I am admittedly not well-versed in the intricacies of the Mexican legal system, I understand that Sergeant Tahmooressi's attorney, Mr. Benitez, has introduced clear evidence of irregularities with the initial encounter with Mexican authorities that give rise to human rights complaints and may well evidence deliberately altered or otherwise deficient documents. I also understand that he was held for nearly 8 hours without counsel, without a translator and without the office of the Federal Prosecutor being notified, at which point he signed a document drafted in Spanish (a language he does not speak) which is purported to be a confession. Most concerning, it is my understanding that the Judge hearing the case has sanctioned customs officials for failing to turn over surveillance footage from the encounter which projects a lack of transparency that goes to the heart of any concept of due process. All of this significantly colors my view on whether he has received due process and raises the specter of serious misconduct, which I would argue requires an immediate investigation. I take these issues extremely seriously and I'm certain that this is not a standard of justice that Mexico wishes to convey to the rest of the world.

I am increasingly concerned that Sergeant Tahmooressi's situation has been complicated by what we all know to be a challenging political climate in both countries surrounding our border. While there is a clear problem in need of serious solutions, I am frequently concerned with the anti-Mexican tone that a vocal few take on this issue. *Without reservation, I repudiate the anti-Mexican rhetoric that is all too frequent from our side of the border and I further repudiate the conflating of issues that has infected the debate on this case. Whatever the political challenges may be, the*

potential challenges raised by the prospect of Sergeant Tahmooressi's PTSD progressing are far worse.

I cannot emphasize enough the gravity of this situation given Sergeant Tahmooressi's PTSD. He has had no mental health care whatsoever since the outset of his incarceration, and being held in complete isolation only serves to amplify those symptoms. His mother, a trained nurse, reports that his affect has turned flat – one warning sign of a significant progression of PTSD, bolstering the need for specialized care that is simply not available in any correctional setting on either side of the border.

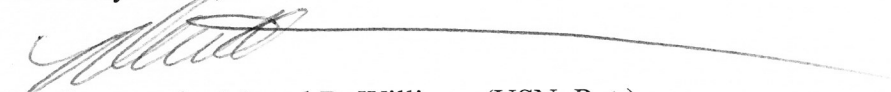
I've told countless young people that leadership is about doing what is right rather than what is easy and that integrity is demonstrated by what one does when no one is looking. This case calls for leadership. The evidence that he entered Mexico entirely by accident is indisputable. The fact that he has a severe mental health condition is similarly not in dispute. The evidence that significant irregularities exist with respect to the case is persuasive. Given the totality of the situation, I'd ask for the Attorney General to undertake an immediate review of this case considering the issues raised.

Ultimately, I am asking you to put yourselves in the shoes of Jill Tahmooressi. Imagine what it must be like to have a mentally ill son deteriorating in a foreign jail as legal proceedings crawl along. Please consider whether the facts of this case justify immediate deportation to the United States for treatment of his mental health issues on humanitarian grounds.

Again, please understand I intend no disrespect towards Mexico or its legal system. I have nothing but respect for the Mexican people. I respectfully submit that this has gone on far too long and the situation is graver by the day given his mental health issues. Mexico has, in my view, a clear factual basis to immediately release and deport Sgt. Tahmooressi and I must make very clear that I too am watching very carefully. I hold the Mexican Government responsible for ensuring his safety and due process during the ongoing proceedings. I cannot emphasize enough my level of concern for Sgt. Tahmooressi's well-being.

I am happy to have my staff confer with your staff, and it would be my pleasure to discuss this matter with any of you personally, and I am more than willing to travel to Mexico to meet with you to the extent that is helpful in expediting Sgt. Tahmooressi's release. My lead staff person is Jonathan Franks, he can be reached by email at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sincerely Yours,



Lt. Commander Montel B. Williams (USN, Ret.)