

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 24, 2020

Brigadier General (ret.) Anthony J. Tata
Senior Advisor
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Brigadier General Tata:

We write to urge that you withdraw your nomination¹ to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy at the Department of Defense (the Department) and resign your current position as a senior advisor. Your record of offensive and inflammatory comments disqualifies you from serving in your current position and the position for which you have been nominated.

If confirmed by the Senate to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, you would become “the principal official reporting to the Secretary of Defense who is responsible for policy development and planning [...], lead[ing] the formulation and coordination of national security and defense policy with the Department of Defense [...], integrat[ing] policies and plans to achieve desired objectives [...] and] build[ing] partnerships and defense cooperation with U.S. friends and allies.”² In other words, you would have significant, wide-ranging influence on the policies and activities of the Pentagon and defense relationships with our most critical allies and partners.

Anyone nominated to be a high-ranking Pentagon official must be qualified and also a person of high character whose record is consistent with the values of our country and those of the U.S. military. Nominees should see the value diversity, inclusion, and unity bring to our institutions. Unfortunately, your history of public remarks does not meet this standard. In 2018, you said that Islam is the “most oppressive violent religion I know of,” and that the 2015 agreement to block Iran’s pathways to a nuclear weapon³ “alone is more than enough evidence of [former President Barack Obama’s] drive to subvert US national interests to Islam and a

¹ The White House, “President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate and Appoint Individuals to Key Administration Posts,” June 10, 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/president-donald-j-trump-announces-intent-nominate-appoint-individuals-key-administration-posts-41/>; “PN1980 — Anthony J. Tata — Department of Defense,” <https://www.congress.gov/nomination/116th-congress/1980?s=1&r=1>.

² Senate Committee on Armed Services, “Advance Policy Questions for John Rood Nominee for Under Secretary of Defense for Policy,” November 16, 2017, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Rood_APQs_11-16-17.pdf.

³ U.S. Department of State, “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,” <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa//index.htm>.

globalist agenda.”⁴ You called President Obama a “terrorist leader” and alleged that the former president “made no secret of his belief that a weaker America made for a stronger world.”⁵ Moreover, you falsely claimed that President Obama “is a Muslim”⁶ – repeating a claim used by then-presidential candidate Donald Trump and others who attempt to incite anti-Muslim prejudice and otherize Islam by suggesting it is an inferior religion and synonymous with terrorism.⁷ You also said in a now-deleted tweet on July 2, 2018, “Never a doubt. Among dozens of clues, Obama supported Russian meddling in 2016 election & influenced Israeli elections to try to oust Netanyahu & help Hamas & Muslim brotherhood U.S. really did have Manchurian Candidate in White House.”⁸

Unfortunately, your inflammatory remarks did not stop there. You reserved further dishonorable and disqualifying rhetoric for members of Congress as well. For example, you claimed that Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Congresswoman Maxine Waters “have always been the same violent extremists” and referred to Congresswoman Waters in particular as a “vicious race baiting racist.”⁹ Only after your nomination became public and reports exposed your repugnant statements, many of which you deleted, you walked them back in a recent letter to the Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman and Ranking Member.¹⁰ In that letter, you reportedly refer to your offensive tweets as an “aberration in a four-decade thread of faithful public service.”¹¹ Furthermore, you noted that despite your “strong record of inclusivity and bipartisanship in my commentary,” you “did misspeak in 2018 on Twitter in hyperbolic conversations” and that “[t]here is no excuse for those comments, for which I take complete responsibility and also fully retract and denounce.”¹²

Your letter to committee leadership appears to be a conveniently timed retraction by someone who has suddenly realized his nomination is in jeopardy. But your multiple past statements cannot be dismissed simply as an aberration. No one with a record of repeated, repugnant statements like yours should be nominated to serve in a senior position of public trust at the Pentagon. Your views are wholly incompatible with the U.S. military’s values.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We call on you to withdraw your nomination.

⁴ CNN, “Top Pentagon policy nominee has a history of Islamophobic and offensive comments,” Em Steck, Andrew Kaczynski and Nathan McDermott, June 12, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/12/politics/pentagon-nominee-tata-trump-kfile/index.html>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ CNN, “Donald Trump’s history of suggesting Obama is a Muslim,” Chris Moody and Kristen Holmes, September 18, 2015, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/09/18/politics/trump-obama-muslim-birther/index.html>.

⁸ CNN, “Democrats on key Senate committee oppose top Pentagon pick as more inflammatory tweets emerge,” Andrew Kaczynski, Em Steck and Nathan McDermott, June 15, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/15/politics/tata-pentagon-nominee-kfile/index.html>


⁹ CNN, “Top Pentagon policy nominee has a history of Islamophobic and offensive comments,” Em Steck, Andrew Kaczynski and Nathan McDermott, June 12, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/12/politics/pentagon-nominee-tata-trump-kfile/index.html>.

¹⁰ Foreign Policy, “Trump Pentagon Nominee Walks Back Offensive Tweets,” Jack Detsch, June 22, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/22/top-trump-pentagon-nominee-walks-back-offensive-tweets/>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator