

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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April 27, 2016

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Office of the Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon, Room 4D652
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Mabus:

I am writing today to express concern with recent U.S. Navy ship naming decisions and to again respectfully request that you give all due consideration to honoring the five service members killed in the terrorist attack in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on July 16, 2015 by naming an appropriate naval vessel the *USS Chattanooga*.

As I previously wrote, on July 16, 2015, a lone terrorist attacked both a United States Military Recruiting Station and a Navy and Marine Corps Operational Support Center, ultimately claiming the lives of Gunnery Sgt. Thomas Sullivan, Staff Sgt. David Wyatt, Sgt. Carson Holmquist, Lance Cpl. Squire "Skip" Wells, and Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Randall Smith. The five service members were awarded the Purple Heart on December 16, 2015 because the attacker was found to be inspired by propaganda from a foreign terrorist organization. In the wake of this tragedy, it is appropriate for the U.S. Navy to honor the legacy of those who lost their lives.

There is clearly ample justification for honoring these five service members. That is why I was surprised and disappointed when it came to my attention that the decision has been made to name DDG-120 after retired Senator Carl Levin. According to the Navy's policies for naming ships, destroyers are to be named for deceased members of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The DDG-120 decision does not conform to naming conventions. Mr. Levin never served in any branch of the U.S. military. As you recently stated, "Destroyers are named for heroes." There is no shortage of heroes who have served in the U.S. military and deserve to be honored.

In addition, it is worth noting that Mr. Levin is now employed as a Senior Counsel for a law firm in Michigan, which includes an extensive government relations practice. The firm's website states that his role is to "assist publicly and privately held companies in identifying and addressing legal, business and reputational risks that may bring them under public or government scrutiny and result in legal action or loss of business." While having a U.S. Navy ship named after him may assist Mr. Levin in his current professional endeavors, this decision is clearly not in line with the proud heritage of the U.S. Navy.

I respectfully request that you reconsider the naming of DDG-120 and instead honor those who have fallen in service to our great nation, such as the five service members who lost their lives in the terrorist attack in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Graves". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below a horizontal line that extends to the left.

Tom Graves
Member of Congress