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April 30, 2018

The Honorable Jim Mattis  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1300

Dear Secretary Mattis,

I write concerning the dismissal of Jeanette and Curt Mize, the Jewish lay leaders at Fort Campbell and urge you to ensure that this matter is fully investigated in a thorough manner.

Jeanette Mize claims that she and her family were dismissed without cause by the division chaplain, Col. John Murphy, and his deputy chaplain, Lt. Col. Sean Wead on February 28th. To this date, there has been no public explanation as to why they were dismissed.

Jeanette Mize and her family have provided weekly Shabbat and yearly worship services for the roughly eighty members of the Jewish Community at Fort Campbell since 1999. Since their dismissal, no Shabbat services have been held at Fort Campbell and the nearest synagogue in Nashville is more than an hour away.

I am also deeply concerned by reports that the chaplains attempted to prevent a Passover event on March 30th and then refused to support it because it conflicted with Good Friday celebrations. Denial of religious services on the grounds that they conflict with the Christian schedule would be an egregious infringement on the rights of the Jewish service members and their families.

Members of the U.S. Armed Forces are entitled to freely exercise their religion. The dismissal of the Jewish lay leaders, the reports that division chaplains refused to support attempts to celebrate Passover, and the discontinuation of Shabbat services would appear to infringe on the Constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom of the Jewish service members at Fort Campbell.

I am pleased that a 15-6 investigation has been opened to look into this matter and I urge its swift and thorough completion.

Sincerely,

Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress