

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2020

The Honorable Ryan D. McCarthy  
Secretary of the Army  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Secretary McCarthy:

We write to express our deep concern regarding the alarming number of Soldiers who have died while serving at Fort Hood this year. As you are aware, 28 servicemembers have died at the installation in 2020. The deaths have been from a wide range of causes including training accidents and suicides, and also homicides and causes that are still under investigation. We seek to highlight two deaths in particular, those of Private Carlton L. Chee, 25, and Specialist Miguel D. Yazzie, 33 – both members of the Navajo Nation.

Private Chee collapsed during a training exercise on August 28, 2020 and passed away several days later on September 2, 2020. We understand that Private Chee returned from Poland days prior to the incident. There are many unanswered questions related to his medical treatment and inconsistent information provided by military officials.

Specialist Yazzie was found unresponsive on Fort Hood and was airlifted to a hospital before passing away on July 3, 2020. Specialist Yazzie's father was unaware of any medical conditions his son may have had.

Both families continue to seek answers as to why their otherwise healthy sons would have passed away during a routine training exercise or while on duty at Fort Hood. The lack of communication from military officials is disconcerting.

We share a commitment to the safety of our servicemen and women. We understand that you have appointed a panel consisting of civilian experts to conduct an independent review of the command climate at Fort Hood and have more recently changed the leadership at the installation. In addition to these actions, we ask that you complete thorough and prompt investigations into the multiple ongoing cases of deaths at Fort Hood this year and update Congress and the families of the fallen Soldiers on your findings as soon as possible.

Members of the Navajo Nation have a long and distinguished history serving in all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. Along with other Native American tribal members, the men and women of the Navajo Nation serve in the military at a higher per-capita rate than any other population group in the United States. We seek answers on behalf of the families of these two members of the Navajo Nation and for the families of the other servicemembers who have died this year at Fort Hood. We look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
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Martha McSally  
United States Senator

  
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Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator