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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

February 4, 2016

Committees:

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Chairman, Subcommittee on  
Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats  
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific

**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

Subcommittee on Space  
Subcommittee on Energy

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretaries Kerry and Carter:

We are writing to you again to express our continuing concern with China's activities in Djibouti and plans of a major Chinese military facility there. We are also concerned with the on-going erratic and anti-democratic behavior by the country's president. Lastly, and most significantly, we are worried that our own strategic interests around the Horn of Africa, specifically our critical counter-terrorism operations, will be impacted by China's growing strategic influence in the region.

At the end of November, China announced that it plans to build its first permanent overseas military installation in Djibouti - a naval facility that will reportedly house 10,000 personnel and require the U.S. Navy to relocate several of its facilities.

With the construction of Gwadar Port in Pakistan, artificial islands in the South China Sea, the Chinese base in Djibouti represents a troubling trend in Chinese military policy. But unlike the unprecedented construction of islands in the South China Sea, in Djibouti, it simply bought its access to the country's port, by building the presidential palace, two airports and a railroad.

On the same day China announced its agreement with Djibouti to build a naval base, President Ismail Omar Guelleh announced that he would run for an unprecedented fourth term, having earlier changed the country's constitution allowing him to serve a third term. A government crackdown on political opposition immediately followed President Guelleh's announcement, with hundreds of people having been arrested and 19 reportedly killed on December 21 in a government raid on a religious gathering. Each day there are news reports of continued harassment and arrest of political opposition members and of journalists covering these activities.

In London, a judge ordered President Guelleh to testify in person on corruption charges related to the port, marking the first time a serving head of state had been ordered to appear in a British court since King Charles 1 in 1649. This and other erratic behavior by the President has led to number of international publicly traded energy companies to decide to abandon their investment plans in Djibouti. When socially responsible firms leave, they are often replaced by Chinese companies.

President Guelleh is not a reliable partner for the United States. President Obama last summer rightly criticized Africa's president-for-life culture. He could have been speaking about Djibouti and President Guelleh. We have seen free and open elections in Senegal, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana and most recently Nigeria; we should press for the same in Djibouti and urge President Guelleh to step down. Our interests are too important to do otherwise.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Dana Rohrabacher  
Member of Congress



Chris Smith  
Member of Congress

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