

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 21, 2023

Ms. Natasha Alexander-Mingo
Chief United States Probation Officer
Central District of California
300 N. Los Angeles Street, Suite 1300
Los Angeles, CA 90012-3323

Dear Ms. Alexander-Mingo:

As Lt. Ridge Alkonis' Member of Congress and as a Member of the Armed Services Committee, we write regarding the tragic case of Lt. Alkonis, who is finally back in this country after a long and painful imprisonment in Japan. Lt. Alkonis is awaiting a decision on his release date from the United States Parole Commission. We understand that one of the final important steps remaining before Lt. Alkonis can finally be returned to his wife and three young children is for one of your officers to draft the Pre-Sentence Report (PSR) concerning Lt. Alkonis's case. Given the pain and suffering the Alkonis family has been through and more than 17 months Lt. Alkonis has already served in confinement in Japan, we respectfully request that the PSR be expedited to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, we respectfully request you disregard any submission or requests by the Japanese government conveyed to you or your probation officers that would negatively prejudice our country's ability to expeditiously and independently judge Lt. Alkonis' case.

As you may know, Lt. Alkonis was stationed as a weapons officer aboard the *USS Benfold* at Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan. On May 29, 2021, Lt. Alkonis' family tells us he was driving his wife and three children back from a day trip to Mt. Fuji when, through no fault of his own, he suffered an episode of altitude sickness, lost consciousness behind the wheel, and crashed into a parking lot, which resulted in the deaths of two Japanese citizens. Lt. Alkonis' family tell us he did not commit a crime that day; he does not drink or use drugs and he had sufficient rest the night before. This was a tragic accident, one for which Lt. Alkonis expressed his deep remorse and paid more than \$1.6 million in restitution, in keeping with Japanese tradition and culture, understanding that this would obviate any prison sentence in that country.

Unfortunately, however, on October 18, 2021, Lt. Alkonis was sentenced to three years in prison. On July 25, 2022, Lt. Alkonis reported to Yokosuka prison and began serving his 3-year sentence. When considering the 26 days he spent in solitary confinement (which his family tells us was without counsel or medical care) after the accident, Lt. Alkonis has now served more than 17 months in prison, for a tragic accident he has done everything in his power to address.

Fortunately, Lt. Alkonis was transferred to a federal detention center in California under the International Prisoner Transfer Program. This was a positive next step, but we believe more needs to be done to reunite Lt. Alkonis with his family. The Department of Justice and the

United States Parole Commission, as stated in 18 U.S.C. § 4106A, are responsible for “determin[ing] a release date and a period and conditions of supervised release for an offender transferred to the United States to serve a sentence of imprisonment, as though the offender were convicted in a United States district court of a similar offense,” without unnecessary delay. The immediate step to allow that is the report by your Probation Officer.

As you develop your Pre-Sentence Report (PSR), we respectfully request you keep the following in mind:

1. The US Sentencing Guidelines for the conduct charged in Japan calls for a sentence of between 10–16 months, only half of which is required to be served in confinement. Lt. Alkonis has served more than 17 months, all of which has been in confinement.
2. Lt. Alkonis is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis and commissioned in May of 2012. He has over 11 years of honorable military service.
3. The Navy awaits his return so that he can take back up his dedicated service to this country.
4. Lt. Alkonis has no prior criminal record. He has a loving and supportive family. He does not use any drugs or alcohol.
5. Lt. Alkonis is a devoted husband and father of three young children.

The Alkonis family has suffered enough. Lt. Alkonis has spent more than 507 days in confinement. We believe it is time to end this nightmare for Lt. Alkonis and his family. Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to Mary Hrinkevich in Rep. LaLota’s office at Mary.Hrinkevich@mail.house.gov or Jonathan Gilbert in Rep. Levin’s office at Jonathan.Gilbert@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Nick LaLota
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Merrick Garland, Attorney General, United States Department of Justice