February 13, 2020

The Honorable Mark Esper  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper:

We write to request a meeting with you to discuss adding the names of the 74 sailors lost aboard the USS Frank E. Evans on June 3, 1969 to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The legacy of these brave Americans, the “Lost 74,” should no longer go unrecognized due to an arbitrary line on a map.

As you may be aware, after serving multiple tours off the coast of Vietnam, the USS Frank E. Evans was ordered to participate in a nearby training exercise. During practice maneuvers on June 3, 1969, the ship collided with an aircraft carrier and sank, killing 74 sailors who were aboard the ship. Each of these service members made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our nation, yet their names are not located on the Vietnam Memorial wall. While the incident occurred approximately 100 miles outside of the official combat zone, the ship and a majority of the deceased sailors had previously provided naval gunfire off the coast of Vietnam, including during the Tet Offensive. The ship was also set to return to combat after the exercise, and the other ships in the Evans group returned to Vietnamese waters following the exercise.

Last year marked 50 years since we lost these 74 sailors. Honoring the sacrifice of these 74 sailors alongside the nearly 60,000 other service members who died in Vietnam is long overdue. We look forward to a meeting with you and working together to ensure their names are added and their sacrifice is rightfully commemorated.

Sincerely,

Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator