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AUG 26 2004

Mr. Michael Ratner, President
Ms. Barbara Olshansky, Deputy Legal Director
Mr. Steven Watt, Fellow
Center for Constitutional Rights
666 Broadway Avenue
New York, NY 10012

Dear Mr. Ratner, Ms. Olshansky, and Mr. Watt:

Thank you for your May 13, 2004 letter to President Bush on behalf of Messrs. Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal. I assure you that the Department of Defense takes allegations of abuse seriously, corrects problems as they are identified, and takes appropriate action against those who have engaged in misconduct.

These individuals were captured in Afghanistan, fighting illegally for al-Qaeda. They were treated humanely while in Department custody. Messrs. Rasul and Iqbal were provided food, shelter, medical care, mail service, reading materials, and clothing, and they were afforded opportunities to practice their faith.

The Initial Response Force (IRF) is a trained guard force that handles life-threatening and other critical situations including suicide attempts and hostage situations. Many prison systems around the world, including those in the United States, have an IRF-like capability. The existence of the IRF and other support personnel with specialized skills and training at Guantanamo exemplify that the detention facility is operated professionally and reflect the importance of ensuring the security and safety of the detainees.

It is also important to recognize that there are legitimate reasons for restraining detainees. Restraints are permissible and help keep detention facility personnel and other detainees safe, despite the fact that they may cause discomfort.

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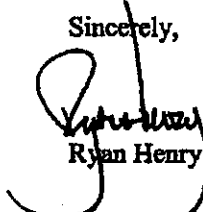
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The Department has improved detention operations through extensive internal reviews and dialogue with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Your interest in this complex and important subject is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Ryan Henry

SecDef

ACLU (DP) 1857

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