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BY FAX AND MAIL
The Honourable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
Office of the Secretary
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301, USA

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22 January 2002

Dear Secretary of Defense

Amnesty International wrote to you earlier this month to seek assurances that all those taken into US custody during the ongoing military operations in Afghanistan will be treated humanely with full respect for their human rights under international law.

As you are no doubt aware, since the United States began transferring detainees to Camp X-Ray in the Guantanamo Bay naval base, there has been widespread international concern regarding reports of aspects of the treatment of the detainees and of the physical conditions under which they are being held. Concern has also been voiced about the legal status of the detainees and their access to internationally-agreed safeguards applying to all prisoners and detainees.

I am writing to request permission for an Amnesty International delegation to visit the Guantanamo base in the near future, to observe first hand the conditions under which the prisoners are detained, to interview detainees, and to receive more information about their treatment from senior officials on site. While we welcome the access given to the International Committee of the Red Cross, we believe that it is essential that appropriate human rights organizations and others have an opportunity to visit detainees and report on conditions.

As you may be aware, an Amnesty International delegation visited the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay in September 1994, to look into the situation with regard to Cuban and Haitian asylum-seekers who were detained there after being intercepted at sea by the US authorities. We were appreciative of the access given by the authorities at that time.

I will ask a staff member of our International Secretariat to contact your office in the near future to ascertain when a visit can be arranged. We very much hope that you will agree to facilitate such a visit.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Javier Zúñiga
Director of Regional Strategy

cc. The Honourable Colin Powell, Secretary of State

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