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GLOBAL SECURITY  
AFFAIRS

Jamil Dakwar  
Director, Human Rights Program  
American Civil Liberties Union

FEB 03 2009

Dear Mr. Dakwar,

I am writing in response to your letter of January 9, 2009, to Secretary Gates about detainees at Guantanamo.

The Department of Defense (DoD) treats detainees under its control humanely and in a manner fully in accordance with U.S. legal obligations. Detainees in Department of Defense control at Guantanamo are provided quality care that ensures their humane and safe detention.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is permitted access to Department of Defense detention facilities and meets privately with detainees under DoD control at Guantanamo.

Although some detainees at Guantanamo have chosen to engage in a hunger strike, the Department's policy is that it will not allow detainees under its control to engage in self-harm activities. Detainees who continue their hunger strike to the point of endangering their health or who have medical conditions for which continued fasting might pose a threat to their life or health, as determined by the medical staff at Joint Task Force Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO), may be involuntarily fed. Involuntary feeding must be ordered by the JTF-GTMO Commander and only after appropriate medical evaluation and a determination that it is medically necessary to preserve the health of the detainee. This feeding is safe, humane, and consistent with the practices of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons.

Contrary to the statements in your letter, the Department has consistently heard from officials visiting Guantanamo from around the world that the detention operations are professionally and well conducted and a model for detention operations and prisons around the world. The Department will continue to ensure that any detainees under its control, anywhere in the world, are held according to applicable law and policy.

Sincerely,

For Sandra Hodgkinson  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of  
Defense for Detainee Affairs

