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FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

... a Quaker lobby in the public interest

December 7, 2005

General Peter Pace
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
9999 Joint Staff Pentagon
Washington, DC 20318-9999

Dear General Pace,

I write on this, the 64th anniversary of the strike on Pearl Harbor and other military installations in Hawaii by aircraft of the Imperial Japanese Navy, to commend you for your firm, principled stand on the responsibility of U.S. service members to physically intervene (if necessary) to stop inhumane treatment.

Inhumanity, of course, is almost as old as the initial encounters between human beings. But in the 20th century, it reached seemingly new depths. The mere mention of Bataan and Corregidor summons images of the thousands who perished on the Death March to or endured starvation, torture, and other inhumane treatment in prison camps. "Hanoi Hilton" and "tiger cages" summon similar spectres from Vietnam, where we both served.

The last century also gave the modern world the antidote to such treatment: the Geneva Conventions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and treaties that implement the principles forbidding and enforce the proscriptions against inhumane treatment. Yet on November 29, 2005, you had to correct publicly Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld who said reporting abuse was the extent of a service member's obligation. We fully support your insistence that U.S. military personnel have an obligation to intervene when they see torture taking place to stop it from happening.

Members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), believing that every person is blessed to have "that of God" within, firmly concur that the obligation of those in power or wielding power extends beyond noting and reporting in attempting to stop all forms of torture and other inhuman practices. We at the Friends Committee on National Legislation encourage you to hold fast to this principle and to insist that everyone who wears a uniform of the U.S. armed services shares and practices your standard.

Whether inhumane treatment, torture, or war, our watchword must be, "Never again."

Respectfully,

Daniel M. Smith
Colonel, USA (Ret.)
Senior Fellow on Military Affairs