

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 4, 2011

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-0001

Dear Secretary Gates:

I write to request that I be able to visit Private First Class Bradley Manning at the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia.

As you know, I am concerned about reports of his treatment while in custody that describe alarming abuses of his constitutional rights and his physical health. A March 2009 article by surgeon Atul Gawande discusses the effects of solitary confinement on prison inmates and prisoners of war: "Without sustained social interaction, the human brain may become as impaired as one that has incurred a traumatic injury." Studies highlighted that such prisoners, months after being released, revealed severe brain abnormalities mirroring those who had endured significant physical head trauma.¹

Private Manning's guilt or innocence is a question for adjudication and his treatment at Quantico severely undermines the presumption of innocence as enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and raises questions as to whether he is truly able to stand trial. His care while in the custody of the Department of Defense is the responsibility of the U.S. Government and as a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform it is my duty to conduct effective oversight.

Thank you for your attention to this request. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress

¹ Gawande, Atul. (2009, March 30). Hell Hole: The United States holds tens of thousands of inmates in long-term solitary confinement. Is this torture? *The New Yorker*. Online. Accessible: http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/03/30/090330fa_fact_gawande.