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For Immediate Release

Event: Friday rally and march turns again to the torture policies and crimes of the Bush Administration, calling for support for lawsuit filed against Rumsfeld.

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Time: 5:00 p.m.

Place: Pioneer Courthouse Square

Friday rally and march turns again to the torture policies and crimes of the Bush Administration, calling for support for lawsuit filed against Rumsfeld.

The *Portland Peaceful Response Coalition*'s Friday rally and march will focus once again on the torture policies and crimes of the Bush Administration, throwing support behind the *ACLU* and *Human Rights First* lawsuit filed this week against Donald Rumsfeld, accusing the Defense Secretary of direct responsibility for the torture and abuse of detainees in US military custody. Lucas Guttentag, lead counsel in the lawsuit and director of the *ACLU*'s Immigrants' Rights Project, explained the lawsuit in a press statement released Tuesday. "Secretary Rumsfeld bears direct and ultimate responsibility for this descent into horror by personally authorizing unlawful interrogation techniques and by abdicating his legal duty to stop torture," said Guttentag. "He gives lip service to being responsible but has not been held accountable for his actions. This lawsuit puts the blame where it belongs, on the Secretary of Defense."

According to the *ACLU*, the lawsuit was filed in federal court in Illinois on behalf of eight men who were subject to torture and abuse at the hands of U.S. forces under Secretary Rumsfeld's command. They are hoping to attain a court order declaring that Secretary Rumsfeld's actions violated the U.S. Constitution, federal statutes and international law. "Since Abu Ghraib, we have vigorously campaigned for an independent commission to investigate U.S. policies that have led to torture and cruel treatment of detainees," explained Michael Posner, Executive Director of *Human Rights First*. "These calls have gone unanswered by the administration and Congress, and today many of the illegal policies remain in place." Posner said that they had once believed that the US would correct these policies without intervention by the courts. "In bringing this action today, we reluctantly conclude that we were wrong," said Posner.

The eight men who are party to the lawsuit were imprisoned at US detention facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan where, they allege, they were tortured and subject to other forms

of cruel and degrading treatment. The abuse included severe and repeated beatings, cutting with knives, sexual humiliation and assault, mock executions, death threats, and restraint in contorted and excruciating positions. None were charged with any crime and all have since been released.

According to the lawsuit, the brutal and illegal interrogation techniques were personally approved by Secretary Rumsfeld in December 2002. Those techniques included the use of “stress positions,” 20-hour interrogations, the removal of clothing, the use of dogs, isolation, and sensory deprivation. The ACLU statement notes that some of these abusive practices were later rescinded but that Rumsfeld personally approved a new list in April 2003, which included dietary manipulation, sensory deprivation and “false flag” (leading detainees to believe that they have been transferred to a country that permits torture). They further charge that Rumsfeld made clear that harsher techniques could be used with his personal authorization.

“The Bush Administration, from the Secretary of Defense to the Attorney General and the head of Homeland Security, is now staffed with people whose crimes hearken back to the trials at Nuremberg,” said William Seaman, a volunteer with the PPRC. “These are people who consider themselves above the law, they have made our country the agent of torture and other practices that violate domestic and international law, and they must be held accountable.” Much of the abuse inflicted on detainees in US custody has been documented in official government reports that demonstrate that the abuse was ongoing and not unique to the now-notorious Abu Ghraib prison. Along with other organizations such as the *Center for Constitutional Rights*, the ACLU has obtained over 23,000 pages of documents that concern the prisoner abuses. Now available online at www.aclu.org/torturefoia, the documents outline how as early as 2002 the FBI observed and complained about the abusive interrogation practices used on detainees at Guantanamo, and that these practices spread to US detention facilities in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

“The effects of Rumsfeld's policies have been devastating both to America's international reputation as a beacon of freedom and democracy, and to the hundreds, even thousands of individuals who have suffered at the hands of U.S. forces,” said ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero.

The Friday rally will also discuss the recent incident in Haiti in which the Haitian police opened fire on a peaceful demonstration, killing two people. “The US bears direct responsibility for these crimes,” said Seaman. “The hypocrisy of Bush’s State of the Union address is most clearly evident in his role in the overthrow of Haitian democracy and the return to the rule by terror that the Haitians now face.”