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Panama / pro

Lt. and Mrs. Mark Watson
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23 December 1989

The President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Bush:

Bravo! My wife and I fully support the U.S. invasion of Panama. I am a U.S. Coast Guardsman working in Panama. While we have been stationed here these last six months, we have experienced first hand the rapid deterioration in the quality of life. Day to day life was filled with paranoia and fear because of the increasingly brutal policies of the Noriega government. Traveling anywhere off a U.S. base was trying and stressful because of fear for our personal safety. On numerous occasions the Panamanian Defense Force Transit Police went out of their way to harass us because we were Americans. Peace of mind simply did not exist anywhere for Americans. Many Panamanians themselves were tired of living under conditions of repression imposed by the Noriega regime.

We are glad you chose not to take military action during the October coup, because we were in the lowest state of our personal movement limitations, and we did not know if the coup was meant to trap us into fighting. An October daytime invasion would have certainly meant more civilian casualties and probably a much lesser chance of success. The U.S. military and dependents were much more prepared at the time of the invasion. Also, politically speaking, the timing seemed more acceptable to the international community because of the grave threats to human life near the time of the attack.

The invasion you ordered was a necessity. My wife and I grieve for everyone that died, Americans and Panamanians, but a change had to be made here before conditions worsened. We thank you for making a decision which was certainly a difficult one to make. And we will be forever grateful to the Americans who gave their lives for our safety and freedom. After having experienced the horror of battle where men died and were injured outside our door, we will never take for granted the sacrifices and bravery of our American military. May God bless them and bless you, Mr. President, for our joint fight for democracy and freedom.

Respectfully yours,

Mark P. Watson
Maryanne R. Watson

Lt. & Mrs. Mark P. Watson
U.S. Coast Guard