



League of United Latin American Citizens

April 27, 2007

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Dr. Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary of Defense Gates :

We are writing to express our concern about the New Mexico Guard Unit that was ordered to strip to their gym shorts and searched for gang tattoos while on duty in Kuwait. Although Army officials said the searches last May of 58 New Mexico National Guardsmen in a unit called Task Force Cobra were proper and legal, Brig. Gen. Kenny Montoya, head of the state National Guard, said he believes ethnicity played a role in the episode - the unit is 55 percent Hispanic. The League of United Latin American Citizens strongly condemns discrimination and racial profiling of any kind.

The search was prompted by an unsubstantiated allegation from a soldier in another unit who complained about gang activity among soldiers in Kuwait. The soldier claimed to have seen gang tattoos among members of Task Force Cobra's parent unit.

The Army Criminal Investigation Division turned up no gang tattoos. LULAC is aware that the Army forbids extremist, racist, sexist or vulgar tattoos and prohibits membership in any extremist organization, though the regulations do not specifically mention gangs.

This is no way to treat our American troops that are sacrificing their lives for the cost of our freedom. Racial profiling is reprehensible and should not be condoned on any level.

We urge the Department of the Defense to investigate this matter and address our concerns. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter. We look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Rosa Rosales
LULAC National President