

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 304/91 Prisoner of Conscience/Conscientious Objector

UNITED STATES: Captain Yolanda HUET-VAUGHN (female)

Captain Yolanda Huet-Vaughn, a reservist in the US Army Reserve Medical Corps, was sentenced to 30 months imprisonment and dishonourable dismissal from the Army on 9 August 1991. She pleaded not guilty to charges of "desertion with intent to avoid hazardous duty" resulting from her refusal to report for active duty. Amnesty International considers her to be a prisoner of conscience imprisoned for her opposition, for reasons of conscience, to participating in war.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Captain Yolanda Huet-Vaughn, aged 39, was born in Mexico but moved with her family to the United States in 1955. She is married and has three children aged 2, 5 and 8.

Her unit was called to active duty in December 1990 but she failed to report as a result of her opposition to participating in war on grounds of conscience. Her opposition is based on moral and ethical grounds.

She surrendered to military authorities on 6 February 1991 and was detained at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, even though she was not a flight risk and did not present a danger to the public if released, pending judicial proceedings. She applied for discharge from the Army as a conscientious objector but her application was finally rejected on 1 August 1991.

She was court-martialled in early August 1991 at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; on 8 August the military jury found her guilty of "desertion with intent to avoid hazardous duty" and on 9 August the 30-month prison sentence was imposed. This is the longest prison sentence imposed on military personnel who refused participating in the Gulf war (or any war) and had been imposed on only one other person: Enrique González, born in El Salvador, a US Marine Corps reservist. Captain Huet-Vaughn was immediately taken to the US Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas where she is to serve her sentence.

Captain Huet-Vaughn's case is now to be reviewed by her Commanding General, who can recommend a reduction of her sentence or grant clemency and order her release. This review may be carried out in the next couple of weeks.

The US armed forces are made up of volunteers but there are provisions to seek conscientious status discharge if they become opposed to war or military service as a result of conscientiously held religious, ethical, moral or political beliefs developed throughout a period of time after entering the armed forces. Amnesty International has adopted 24 conscientious objectors to this date who qualify as prisoners of conscience under Amnesty International's guidelines on conscientious objection to military service. They had become opposed to war (either in general or the Gulf war in particular) on grounds of conscience. Furthermore, the US Government imposed limitations

on the consideration of applications for conscientious objector status. These limitations resulted from military directives ordering armed forces personnel to deploy with their units, normally to Saudi Arabia, even if they had an application for conscientious objector status pending.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- explaining that Amnesty International defines a conscientious objector as someone opposed to war for reasons of conscience or profound conviction arising from religious, ethical, moral, humanitarian, philosophical, political or similar motives. Amnesty International considers such individuals to be prisoners of conscience if, for example, the person cannot register his or her conscientious objection at a specific point in time;
- stating that Amnesty International has adopted Captain Yolanda Huet-Vaughn as a prisoner of conscience for the reasons given above;
- explaining that Amnesty International seeks the unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience;
- urging General Christman to exercise his power of clemency to this end.

APPEALS TO:

General Daniel Christman
 Commanding General
 US Army Engineer Center
 Fort Leonard Wood, MO 65473-5000
 USA
 Telegrams: General Daniel Christman, Fort Leonard Wood,
 MO 65473-5000, USA
 Faxes: + (314) 563 5555

COPIES TO:

Captain Hooper
 Trial Defence Counsel
 Fort Leonard Wood
 MO 65473-5000
 USA

Citizen Soldier:

(an organization which advises conscientious objectors in the USA and which has been working on the case of Captain Huet-Vaughn)
 175 Fifth Avenue, Suite 808
 New York, NY 10010
 USA

and to diplomatic representatives of the USA in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 11 October 1991.