

AI Index: AMR 51/06/91

Distr: SC/PO

0001 hrs gmt Thursday 7 February 1991

**£UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:**  
**@AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TAKES UP**  
**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR AS PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE**

Amnesty International said today that a US soldier jailed after he refused to help prepare supplies for troops in Saudi Arabia is a prisoner of conscience and the organization fears that more of the hundreds of people claiming to be conscientious objectors may also face unjust imprisonment.

"The US authorities have put him behind bars simply for exercising his fundamental human right to conscientious objection," Amnesty International said.

Sergeant George Morse - the first prisoner of conscience adopted by Amnesty International in the US since 1987 - was sentenced to five months' imprisonment in December last year for refusing to obey an order to help prepare supplies for troops in Saudi Arabia because he objects on moral and religious grounds to participating in all wars.

Morse has said that his conscientious objection developed some time after he re-enlisted in the army four years ago, but that he was prepared to serve his full term until he was ordered to help prepare supplies for troops in Saudi Arabia. He was due to be discharged last December, but since the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces the US authorities have suspended all discharges.

Since November last year, the US government has not allowed soldiers to apply for conscientious objector status until their unit has reached its final destination. Even soldiers who have been told they will be sent to Saudi Arabia, but are still in preparation in the US, cannot apply for conscientious objector status.

The organization noted that the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has recognized conscientious objection to military service as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

"We believe that is a right at all times - before joining the army, while in training, or even during a war," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International has called on the US authorities to release Sergeant Morse immediately and unconditionally.

**EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY 1991**