



Society of Environmental Journalists

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April 9, 2014

Chuck Hagel, Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

The Society of Environmental Journalists condemns in the strongest possible terms the treatment of two *Toledo Blade* journalists by military security officers outside a tank plant in Lima, Ohio.

Reporter Tyrel Linkhorn and photographer Jetta Fraser were detained and Fraser's cameras confiscated simply because they took photographs of the facility from a publicly accessible location.

The *Blade* has filed a federal court lawsuit over the incident, which clearly violated the First Amendment rights -- as well as the Fourth and Fifth Amendment rights -- of the *Blade* and its staffers.

SEJ members around the country have in recent years expressed concerns that heightened security patrols around a variety of industrial facilities have threatened the ability of journalists to photograph legitimate news subjects such as dangerous chemical facilities located near populated communities.

This incident makes obvious that the Obama administration needs to provide clear guidance to military employees and contractors so similar unconstitutional harassment of journalists does not continue.

We ask that the Defense Department apologize publicly to the *Blade* and its journalists and issue a written warning to security staff not to treat other journalists this way.

Sincerely,

Beth Parke, Executive Director, Society of Environmental Journalists

Joseph A. Davis, Director, SEJ WatchDog Project

*Strengthening the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media
to advance public understanding of environmental issues*