

General James N. Mattis

10/30/2007

Dear Sir,

We are writing to you on behalf of Sgt. Lawrence G. Hutchins. Though his rank was taken, we will always consider him to be *our* sergeant. Hutchins is the consummate leader and Marine NCO. Time and again he demonstrated his knowledge, judgment, and leadership under fire. His love of God, Corps, and Country is plainly apparent to all, and his steadfast courage and loyalty are obvious to all of us who have had the honor of serving with him. He is the very epitome of all that a Marine expects from a squad leader, and the personification of what it means to be an infantryman. There is no Marine, living or dead, in whose charge we would more gladly place our lives.

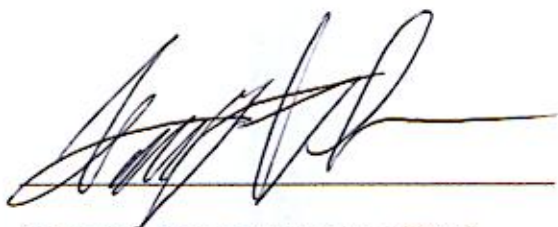
Hutchins' skill as a leader of Marines is beyond question. His unwavering devotion to those under his command and his firm and fair hand bear witness to that skill. In combat his conduct not only as a Marine, but as a leader was above reproach and in the greatest tradition of Marine Corps infantry. His calm, levelheaded judgment under fire and his ability to inspire and drive his Marines proves his worthiness to shoulder the burden of command.

We make no excuse for our actions, nor for those of Sgt. Hutchins; there is none to offer. In making your decision, we do not ask that you judge only what we did; that we did wrong is beyond question. We ask that you also examine the reasons *why* we did it. We are not sociopaths, nor are we sadists. Our crime was an act born of devotion to duty and love of country. Our job was not to be an army of occupation, but of liberation. Our aim was not to become terrorists, but to root out and destroy all those who would deny security and freedom to the Iraqi people as well as our own. "To locate, close with, and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver, and to repel the enemy's assault by fire and close combat." From recruit training every Marine knows the mission of the Marine Corps rifle squad, but none lived it as faithfully as Hutchins. He demanded that every one of his Marines understand and live this mission every day. Hutchins' only goal was to destroy the enemy and bring all of his Marines home alive.

Hutchins has the capacity to become a positive, productive force in the world. His dedication, discipline, and intelligence which served him as a Marine will continue to serve him always. His wife and young daughter need him, but more than that the country needs him. This nation needs more men like Sgt. Hutchins, men who are sure in their convictions and who have the strength to fight for all that is worth protecting. This country will be safe only as long as men like Hutchins continue to place their lives between the horrors of war and the people that they love.

Sgt. Hutchins is our hero. He is our leader, our mentor, and our brother. That any of us survived the hell that is Iraq is a testament to his leadership and devotion. The greatest honor of our lives has been serving under him, and there is nothing that could ever shake the love and respect we bear for him. We respectfully ask that he be released from confinement in recognition of his service to our country, to our Corps, and to us.

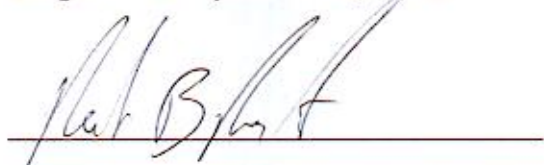
Respectfully,



Corporal Henry D. Lever, USMC



Lance Corporal Saul H. Lopezromo, USMC



Private Robert B. Pennington, USMC



Private Marshall M. Maginca, USMC



Private Trent D. Thomas, USMC



Private John J. Jodka, USMC



Private Jerry E. Shumate, USMC



Private Tyler A. Jackson, USMC