



Office of the Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

April 4, 2011

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

I am writing in response to your letters to me dated February 16 and March 18, 2011, regarding the Thomson Correctional Center in Carroll County, Illinois. I am sending a similar response to Senator Mark Kirk, who joined in your March 18 letter.

As you know, the Department wishes to acquire the Thomson facility in order to provide critically needed high security bed space for the federal Bureau of Prisons. The current population of high security federal penitentiaries is 51% above rated capacity, and continues to grow. The purchase of an existing state facility such as Thomson would be substantially less expensive than the construction of an equivalent high security facility in the current market, and would expand federal prison capacity much sooner than the three to four years it would take to construct a new prison.

I appreciate your leadership in addressing the dangers of prison overcrowding, and in fostering community support for the federal government's acquisition of this unused state facility.

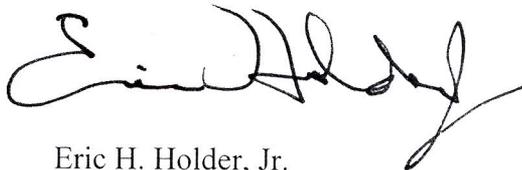
The President's FY11 budget requested \$237 million for the acquisition, renovation, and operation of the Thomson facility. However, under the FY11 Continuing Resolutions, the Department lacks sufficient money to purchase or activate Thomson using currently available funds. We look forward to working with you to obtain additional appropriated funds for this important and needed project.

You have asked whether detainees currently held in the Department of Defense facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, would be transferred to or housed at the Thomson Correctional Center. While we are confident the Thomson facility would be amply secure enough to house such individuals, Congress has since prohibited the use of funds to transfer such detainees to the United States. The Administration opposed that restriction for the reasons set forth in the letter I sent to Senators Reid and McConnell on December 9, 2010. Nonetheless, consistent with current law, we will not transfer detainees from Guantanamo to Thomson, or otherwise house Guantanamo detainees at Thomson. The Thomson facility would only house federal inmates and would be operated solely by the Bureau of Prisons.

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Page 2

Thank you for your continued support of the Department's efforts to relieve overcrowding in federal prisons. I look forward to working with you to secure resources to acquire the Thomson facility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Holder, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eric H. Holder, Jr.