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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

COALITION OF CLERGY, et al.,
Petitioners,
v.
GEORGE WALKER BUSH, et al.,
Respondents.

CASE NO. CV 02-570 AHM (JTLx)
**ORDER DISMISSING PETITION
FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS
AND FIRST AMENDED PETITION
FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS**

**I.
PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF RULING**

This case results from the sudden attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. Within a few days, the President, with the approval of Congress (Pub. L. No. 107-40 (September 8, 2001)), commanded the Armed Forces of the United States to use all necessary and appropriate force against the persons responsible for those attacks, who soon came to be known as the “Al Qaeda terrorist network.” The President dispatched American forces to Afghanistan, where that group was believed to be functioning with the active support of the “Taliban” government then in power in that country. In the course of combat operations, American forces, as well as other nations allied with the United States, captured or secured

1 the surrender of thousands of persons. Beginning in early January 2002, the
2 Armed Forces transferred scores of these captives to the United States Naval Base
3 at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (“Guantanamo”). Their confinement in Guantanamo
4 led to this action.

5 Petitioners are a group referring to themselves as the “Coalition of Clergy,
6 Lawyers, and Professors.” They include at least two journalists; ten lawyers;
7 three rabbis; and a Christian pastor. Some of these individuals are prominent
8 professors at distinguished law schools or schools of journalism. One is a former
9 Attorney-General of the United States. On January 20, 2002 they filed a Verified
10 Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus on behalf of “Persons Held Involuntarily at
11 Guantanamo Naval Air Base, Cuba.” In substance, the petition alleges that the
12 captives held at Guantanamo (the “detainees”) are in custody in violation of the
13 Constitution or the laws or treaties of the United States, in that they: (1) have
14 been deprived of their liberty without due process of law, (2) have not been
15 informed of the nature and cause of the accusations against them and (3) have not
16 been afforded the assistance of counsel. The petition also suggests, somewhat
17 elliptically, that the detainees have rights under the Geneva Convention that have
18 been violated, such as “prohibition of [*sic*] transferring persons taken prisoner in
19 [*sic*] war from the country of their capture.” (Pet. Memo. 7:16-17)

20 Petitioners allege that “[b]ecause the persons for whom relief is sought
21 appear to be held incommunicado and have been denied access to legal counsel,
22 application properly is made by petitioners acting on their behalf. 28 U.S.C. §
23 2242. . . .” (*Id.* 7:20-23)

24 The relief that petitioners seek is a writ or order to show cause (1) directing
25 the respondents to “identify by full name and country of domicile and all other
26 identifying information in their possession each person held by them within three
27 days;” (2) directing respondents “to show the true cause(s) of the detention of
28

1 each person;” and (3) directing respondents to produce the detainees at a hearing
2 in this court. (*Id.* 8:14-23; 9:1-3)

3 The persons named as respondents are President George W. Bush;
4 Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; Richard B. Myers, the Chairman of
5 the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gordon R. England, the Secretary of Navy; and five
6 other named individuals and “1000 Unknown Named United States Military
7 Personnel,” all of whom are alleged to be military officers responsible for the
8 operations at the Guantanamo Naval Base.

9 On January 22, 2002, two days after the petition was filed, the Court
10 presided over a brief hearing at which it expressed strong doubts that it has
11 jurisdiction to entertain the petition. The Court ordered the parties to address that
12 threshold question in written briefs. They have done so and appeared at a second
13 hearing today.¹

14 Having reviewed and considered all the arguments and conducted
15 additional research on its own, the Court rules as follows:

- 16 1. Petitioners do not have standing to assert claims on behalf of the
17 detainees.
- 18 2. Even if petitioners did have standing, this court lacks jurisdiction to
19 entertain those claims.

21
22 ¹ On February 11, 2002, after the parties had filed their respective briefs on
23 the threshold jurisdictional issues, petitioners filed a “First Amended” petition
24 purporting to add a claim under what they refer to as the “cruel and unusual clause”
25 of the Eighth Amendment. Counsel for petitioners had acknowledged at the hearing
26 “I’m going to have to proceed on the petition as it is right now. And if a decision is
27 reached to add an Eighth Amendment claim, then I’m going to have to ask for
28 permission to do that.” He neither sought nor received permission. Moreover, the
court instructed the parties that “if there is jurisdiction the petition could be amended
at a later time.” (Tr., p.10-11) The Amended Petition does not affect, much less
cure, the jurisdictional defects described below, and this Order applies to both
petitions.

1 their liberty.” *Jones v. Cunningham*, 371 U.S. 236, 243, 83 S.Ct. 373, 377
2 (1963).²

3 Although the writ of habeas corpus plays a central role in American
4 jurisprudence, there are many limitations on a court’s authority to issue such a
5 writ. Here, in urging the court to dismiss the petition - - i.e., effectively refuse to
6 issue a writ - - respondents invoke three such limitations. They contend:
7 (1) petitioners lack “standing” to come to this court - - i.e., they are not entitled to
8 ask the court on the detainees’ behalf to order respondents to justify the detention
9 of the detainees; (2) this particular federal court lacks jurisdiction to entertain the
10 petition; and (3) no federal district court anywhere has jurisdiction. Respondents
11 are correct as to all three contentions.

12 **III.**

13 **PETITIONERS DO NOT HAVE STANDING**

14 Respondents argue that petitioners lack standing to assert claims on behalf
15 of the detainees. Whether a plaintiff (or, in the case of a habeas proceeding, a
16 petitioner) has standing “is the threshold question in every federal case,
17 determining the power of the court to entertain the suit The Art. III judicial
18 power exists only to redress or otherwise to protect against injury to the
19 complaining party, even though the court’s judgment may benefit others
20 collaterally. . . .” *Warth v. Seldin*, 422 U.S. 490, 498-499, 95 S. Ct. 2197, 2205
21 (1975).

22 28 U.S.C. § 2242 provides that “[a]pplication for a writ of habeas corpus
23 shall be in writing signed and verified by the person for whose relief it is intended
24 *or by someone acting in his behalf.*” (Emphasis added). Courts use the term
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26
27 ² The foregoing discussion involves only the writ of habeas corpus “ad
28 subjiciendum,” which compels an inquiry into the cause of restraint. There are other
writs of habeas corpus, but they are irrelevant here.

1 “next friend” to describe the person who acts on behalf of another person (the
2 “real party in interest”) for whom the relief is sought. The “next friend” has the
3 burden “clearly to establish the propriety of his status and thereby justify the
4 jurisdiction of the court.” *Whitmore v. Arkansas*, 495 U.S. 149, 110 S. Ct. 1717,
5 1727 (1990).

6 A number of courts have allowed habeas petitions to be filed by “next
7 friends,” although in circumstances different from those here. *See, e.g., U.S. ex*
8 *rel. Toth v. Quarles*, 350 U.S. 11, 76 S. Ct. 1 (1955) (sister, on behalf of ex-
9 serviceman civilian who was arrested by military authorities and taken to Korea
10 to stand trial before a court-martial); *Vargas v. Lambert*, 159 F.3d 1161 (9th Cir.
11 1998) (mother of state court prisoner slated to be executed for murder, where
12 mother made showing sufficient to establish her son’s lack of mental competence
13 to waive his right of appeal); *Nash v. MacArthur*, 184 F.2d 606 (D.C. Cir. 1950)
14 (attorney, on behalf of seven Japanese nationals convicted of war crimes by
15 military commissions).

16 In seeking dismissal of this petition on the basis that petitioners lack “next
17 friend” standing, respondents rely primarily on *Whitmore v. Arkansas, supra*. In
18 *Whitmore*, the named petitioner was a death row inmate. He sought to intervene
19 in an Arkansas state court criminal proceeding in order to prosecute an appeal on
20 behalf of one Simmons, who had been convicted of multiple murders and had
21 waived his right to direct appeal. Whitmore tried to get permission to appeal on
22 behalf of Simmons on the basis that the heinous facts in Simmons’s cases would
23 become included in a database that Arkansas uses for purposes of comparative
24 reviews of capital sentences. Whitmore contended that inclusion of the
25 information about Simmons would make him - - Whitmore - - appear less
26 deserving of execution. Whitmore also purported to proceed as “next friend” of
27 Simmons, hoping to overturn the latter’s death sentence on appeal. Although
28 Whitmore was not seeking a writ of habeas corpus on behalf of Simmons, the

1 Supreme Court analogized his effort to that of a “next friend” in a habeas case,
2 and defined the prerequisites for “next friend” standing.

3 First, a “next friend” must provide an adequate explanation - -
4 such as inaccessibility, mental incompetence, or other disability -
5 - why the real party in interest cannot appear on his own behalf to
6 prosecute the action [Citation]. Second, the “next friend”
7 must be truly dedicated to the best interests of the person on
8 whose behalf he seeks to litigate [Citation]. [It also] has
9 been further suggested that a “next friend” must have some
10 significant relationship with the real party in interest.

11 *Id.* at 162-64 (citations omitted). The Court then held that Whitmore lacked
12 standing because “there was no meaningful evidence that [Simmons] was
13 suffering from a mental disease, disorder or defect that substantially
14 affected his capacity to make an intelligent decision.” *Id.* at 166.

15 The Ninth Circuit has stated that under the *Whitmore* test, “[i]n order to
16 establish next friend standing, the putative next friend must show (1) that the
17 petitioner is unable to litigate his own cause due to mental incapacity, lack of
18 access to court, or other similar disability; and (2) the next friend has some
19 significant relationship with, and is truly dedicated to the best interests of,
20 petitioner.” *Massie ex. rel. Kroll v. Woodford*, 244 F.3d 1192, 1194 (9th Cir.
21 2001). The court will now address this two-prong test.

22 **A. Lack of Access to the Court.**

23 *Whitmore* and the other cases on which respondents rely are all factually
24 distinguishable because the real party in interest clearly *did* have access to the
25 court, could have filed a petition in his own behalf and chose not to do so. Thus,
26 in *Brewer v. Lewis*, 989 F.2d 1021 (9th Cir. 1993), the person denied standing to
27 seek a writ of habeas corpus was a condemned prisoner’s mother. Her son had
28 explicitly sought to abandon all further judicial proceedings, and the mother was
unable to establish that he was incompetent. *Id.* at 1025-1026. Similarly, in
Massie a death row inmate filed a federal habeas corpus petition but then moved
to dismiss it. A journalist who had dealt with the inmate for fifteen years

1 thereupon filed a “next friend” petition on behalf of the inmate. Like the mother
2 in *Brewer* and the “next friend” in *Whitmore*, the journalist failed to present
3 “meaningful evidence” of the inmate’s alleged incompetency to dismiss his own
4 habeas corpus petition. Moreover, at oral argument before the Ninth Circuit, the
5 inmate explicitly opposed the journalist’s petition. *Id.* at 1195. Not surprisingly,
6 the Court found that the journalist lacked standing. *Id.* at 1199.³

7 Here, although the hastily-prepared petition is far from a model of
8 precision or clarity, it does at least allege that the Guantanamo detainees “appear
9 to be held incommunicado and have been denied access to legal counsel. . . .”
10 Pet. Memo. 7:20-23. This is tantamount to alleging lack of access to the court.
11 But standing alone, conclusory allegations such as these are not sufficient to
12 establish standing. *Brewer*, 989 F.2d at 1026; *Massie*, 244 F.3d at 1197
13 (“meaningful evidence” required; “conclusory opinions” are insufficient). In this
14 case, petitioners’ assertions that the detainees are totally incommunicado are not
15 supported by the news articles they attached to the petition. Indeed, as
16 respondents point out, the news articles actually contradict the assertions. Some
17 of the articles reflect that the detainees were given the opportunity to write to
18 friends or relatives (Pet. Mem. p.10); others state that some detainees had already
19 been in contact with diplomats from their home countries (Pet. Mem. pp.16:20-
20 21); yet other articles state that a team from the International Red Cross met with
21 the detainees (Pet. Mem. p.15). In their brief filed a week after respondents’
22 brief, petitioners did not explain these inconsistencies, much less provide a basis

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25 ³ Compare *Groseclose v. Dutton*, 594 F. Supp. 949 (M.D. Tenn. 1984), where
26 next friends, including a death row inmate, minister and two anti-death penalty
27 organizations, were permitted to proceed. There, the real party in interest did not
28 oppose their efforts and the petitioners demonstrated that his previous waiver of the
right to file a habeas petition was involuntary. *Groseclose*, 594 F. Supp. at 951, 961-
62.

1 for the court to disregard them.⁴ Moreover, the Court has been informed that on
2 February 19, 2002, the parents of three specified Guantanamo detainees did file
3 suit on behalf of their respective sons. *Shafiq Rasul, et al. v. Bush*, No. 02-CV
4 00299 (D., D.C.) See, “Suit Says U.S. Violates Prisoners Rights in Cuba,” Wall
5 Street Journal, February 20, 2002, at A10. Respondents are correct that as to the
6 first prong of the *Whitmore-Massie* test, the immediate question before this court
7 is the adequacy of the allegations in the petition concerning lack of access to
8 court. They are also correct that the allegations fail to satisfy that prong. But in
9 court today, counsel for respondents displayed commendable candor in
10 acknowledging that from a practical point of view the detainees cannot be said to
11 have unimpeded or free access to court. Despite the recent filing of a second
12 lawsuit, it would be naive for this court to find that they do enjoy such access.
13 Thus, although it makes no actual finding on the issue, the court will proceed to
14 analyze the second prong under the supposition that the detainees lack access to
15 court.

16 **B. Significant Relationship With The Detainees or “Uninvited Meddlers.”**

17 The second prong of the *Whitmore-Massie* “next friend” test requires the
18 petitioners to demonstrate that they have a “significant relationship” with the
19 detainees. Respondents argue that petitioners cannot demonstrate that they are
20 dedicated to the best interests of the Guantanamo detainees because they have not
21 demonstrated such a relationship. On the question of what constitutes a
22 significant relationship, respondents cite *Davis v. Austin*, 492 F. Supp. 273 (N.D.
23 Ga. 1980), in which a distant relative and a minister were not permitted to
24 proceed on behalf of a death row inmate. But in *Davis* the real party in interest
25 explicitly made a competent decision to forego further proceedings. It was

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27 ⁴ The Court may take judicial notice of the information in the articles attached
28 to the petition. Fed. R. Evid. 201(b). Indeed, both sides cite these articles for
different purposes.

1 because the “next friends” were proceeding *contrary* to the inmate’s wishes that
2 the court found they lacked standing - - not because their ties were too remote.
3 *Id.* at 275-276.

4 Respondents also cite *Lenhard v. Wolff*, 443 U.S. 1306, 100 S. Ct. 3
5 (1979), in arguing that petitioners fail to demonstrate a significant relationship
6 with the detainees. In *Lenhard*, then-Justice Rehnquist granted a stay of a
7 prisoner’s execution on an application filed by two deputy public defenders who
8 had been appointed by the trial court. In *dicta*, Justice Rehnquist noted that
9 “however worthy and high minded the motives of ‘next friends’ may be, they
10 inevitably run the risk of making the actual defendant a pawn to be manipulated
11 on a chessboard larger than his own case.” *Id.* at 1312. However, in *Lenhard*, the
12 lawyers’ right to petition on behalf of the inmate was not in question. Indeed,
13 Justice Rehnquist lauded them for their “commendable fidelity to their
14 assignment” *Id.* at 1308. Moreover, he stated,

15 [I]t strikes me that from a purely technical standpoint a public
16 defender may appear as “next friend” with as much justification as
the mother of [the real party in interest]

17 *Id.* at 1310.

18 Although *Davis* and *Lenhard* are weak authority for respondents, *Whitmore*,
19 *supra*, does buttress their contention that petitioners lack standing, particularly this
20 language:

21 [L]imitations on the “next friend” doctrine are driven by the
22 recognition that it was not intended that the writ of habeas
23 corpus should be availed of, as a matter of course, by
24 intruders or uninvited meddlers, styling themselves next
25 friends Indeed, if there were no restriction on “next
26 friend” standing in federal courts, the litigant asserting only
a generalized interest in constitutional governance could
circumvent the jurisdictional limits of Art. III simply by
assuming the mantle of “next friend.”

27 *Whitmore*, 495 U.S. at 163.

1 The court recognizes that the named petitioners have filed this petition
2 because they perceive there are rights that need to be vindicated. But that
3 consideration, standing alone, does not necessarily make them “uninvited
4 meddlers” within the meaning of *Whitmore*.⁵ See *Warren v. Cardwell*, 621 F.2d
5 319, 321 n.1 (9th Cir. 1980) (California lawyer who filed a petition in his own
6 name on behalf of an Arizona inmate not accessible because of a prison lockdown
7 “was not an uninvited meddler”). There is a difference between being “uninvited
8 because you are meant to be excluded” and being “uninvited but welcome.” The
9 next friend/would-be petitioners in the cases upon which respondents rely fall
10 into the former category, because their efforts were at odds with the desires of the
11 real parties on whose behalf they were attempting to proceed. That is not the case
12 here, because there is no evidence that the Guantanamo detainees affirmatively
13 object to the petitioners’ efforts, and common sense suggests that they would not.⁶
14 But neither is there evidence that they are welcome, so petitioners cannot
15 demonstrate that they fall into the latter category.

16 More than four weeks have elapsed since petitioners filed the original
17 petition. In that period, petitioners’ counsel has filed a brief on jurisdiction, an
18 amended petition and numerous other memoranda and declarations on other
19

20 ⁵ In using the term “uninvited meddlers” in *Whitmore*, Chief Justice Rehnquist
21 cited to *United States ex rel. Bryant v. Houston*, 273 F. 915, 916 (2d Cir. 1921).
22 There, the named petitioner failed to disclose anywhere in her petition who she was,
23 what relationship, if any, she had with the real party in interest or whether the real
24 party was unable to file the petition himself. Chief Justice Rehnquist also cited to
25 *Rosenberg v. United States*, 346 U.S. 273, 291-292, 75 S. Ct. 1152, 1161-1162
26 (1953). There, the real parties in interest already had several attorneys but their
27 habeas petition was prepared by another lawyer who sought to intervene. Justice
28 Frankfurter noted that the legitimate counsel of record “simply had been elbowed out
of the control of their case” by the lawyer who filed the habeas petition. *Id.*

⁶ As Justice Frankfurter stated in a different context, “Nor does law lag behind
common sense.” *Ludecke v. Watkins*, 335 U.S. 160, 167, 68 S.Ct. 1429, 1432
(1948).

1 issues. During that same period, the names of at least some of the detainees have
2 been published by the national press and, as indicated above, parents of three
3 specified detainees have filed suit. Yet there is nothing in the record even
4 suggesting that *any* of the Guantanamo detainees supports this petition. Not one
5 friend, relative, diplomatic or religious representative, fellow countryman or
6 anyone with a direct tie to a particular detainee has authorized this petition.
7 Common sense suggests that something is seriously awry in petitioners' claims to
8 be the appropriate representatives of the detainees. This conclusion is reinforced
9 by yet another telling factor: nowhere have petitioners alleged, much less filed a
10 declaration, that they *attempted* to communicate with the detainees and were
11 prevented from doing so. Although petitioners may regard such efforts as futile
12 and thus unnecessary, to bolster their claimed standing as "next friends" it would
13 have been helpful if they had tried anyway.⁷

14 To summarize, the court finds that the cases on which respondents rely to
15 establish that petitioners lack a sufficient relationship with the detainees or that
16 petitioners can be dismissed as "uninvited meddlers" are all factually
17 distinguishable. Yet these cases state the governing legal principles of standing,
18 and this district court is required to apply them. Petitioners may not be "uninvited
19 meddlers" in the same sense as the petitioners in those cases, but they do lack a
20 "significant relationship" with the detainees - - indeed, any relationship. To
21 permit petitioners to seek a writ of habeas corpus on a record devoid of any
22 evidence that they have sought authorization to do so, much less obtained implied
23 authority to do so, would violate the second prong of the *Whitmore-Massie* test.

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25 ⁷ The court is not suggesting that the mere failure of a "next friend" to
26 establish direct communication with the prisoner and obtain explicit authorization
27 from him is enough to preclude "next friend" petitioners. If it were, then there would
28 be an incentive for the government to keep all captives, even United States citizens,
incommunicado. Although respondents are not advocating that unacceptable and
illegal result, a too-expansive interpretation of "uninvited meddlers" could lead to
it.

1 And it would invite well-meaning proponents of numerous assorted “causes” to
2 bring lawsuits on behalf of unwitting strangers. For these reasons, then, the court
3 finds that petitioners lack standing to file this petition on behalf of detainees.⁸

4 Under standard principles governing leave to amend pleadings, if
5 petitioners sought to amend their petition in order to supplement their claims of
6 standing, this court would be expected to grant such leave. That is not the case,
7 however, if the amended petition, or any amended petition, would be a legal
8 “futility” because it could not satisfy the other jurisdictional requirements. For
9 that reason, the court must proceed to discuss those requirements, for if they
10 preclude this court from exercising jurisdiction then the petition should be
11 dismissed without leave to amend.

12 IV.

13 **THIS COURT LACKS JURISDICTION TO ISSUE THE WRIT** 14 **BECAUSE NO CUSTODIAN IS WITHIN THE TERRITORIAL** 15 **JURISDICTION OF THE COURT.**

16 Respondents argue that even if petitioners have standing this court lacks
17 jurisdiction to entertain this petition because no custodian responsible for the
18 custody of the detainees is present in the territorial jurisdiction of this district.
19 Respondents are correct.

20 The federal statute governing habeas petitions provides that “writs of
21 habeas corpus may be granted by the Supreme Court, any justice thereof, the

22 ⁸ At the hearing today, Prof. Erwin Chemerinsky, one of the named petitioners
23 (but not the author of petitioners’ court papers), argued that the requirement that
24 “next friends” demonstrate a “significant relationship” with the real parties in
25 interest should be relaxed where the real parties lack access to court. He urged that
26 general principles of standing under the constitutional requirements of Art. III favor
27 such an approach. The court chooses to apply the standards enunciated in the
28 *Whitmore-Massie* line of cases and notes that in *Whitmore* the Supreme Court noted
that the limitations on standing that it was applying were in fact consonant with
Article III, and were not based merely on “prudential” limitations. 492 U.S. at 156
n. 1.

1 district courts and any circuit judge *within their respective jurisdictions.*” 28
2 U.S.C. § 2241(a) (emphasis added). As the Supreme Court has explained, “the
3 phrase ‘within their respective jurisdictions’ acts as an obvious limitation upon
4 the action of individual judges” because it reflects the conclusion of Congress
5 that it would be “inconvenient, potentially embarrassing, certainly expensive and
6 on the whole quite unnecessary to provide every judge anywhere with the
7 authority to issue the Great Writ on behalf of applicants far distantly removed
8 from the courts whereon they sat.” *Carbo v. United States*, 364 U.S. 611, 617, 81
9 S. Ct. 338, 342 (1961).⁹

10 In *Schlanger v. Seamans*, 401 U.S. 487, 91 S. Ct. 995 (1971), the Supreme
11 Court held that the Arizona District Court lacked jurisdiction over a habeas
12 petition because the only custodian of the petitioner was outside that district. *Id.*
13 at 490-91. It stated, “the District Court in Arizona has no custodian within its
14 reach against whom its writ can run. . . . [T]he absence of [petitioner’s] custodian
15 is fatal to the jurisdiction of the Arizona District Court.” *Id.* at 491. The Ninth
16 Circuit has applied this rule several times, and the rule is so well-settled that it is
17 unnecessary to cite these cases. Moreover, the Ninth Circuit has expressly held
18 that 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e), which provides for nationwide service of process on
19 officers of the United States, does not extend habeas corpus jurisdiction to
20 persons outside the territorial limits of the district court. *Dunne v. Henman*, 875
21 F. 2d 244, 248 (9th Cir. 1989); *accord*, *Schlanger*, 401 U.S. at 490 n.4.¹⁰

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24 ⁹ In *Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court*, 410 U.S. 484, 93 S. Ct. 1123
25 (1973), the Supreme Court noted that a writ of habeas corpus is issued to the person
26 who has allegedly detained the prisoner unlawfully and held that a federal court with
27 jurisdiction over the custodian can exercise jurisdiction even if the prisoner is
28 outside that court’s jurisdiction.

¹⁰ Despite the clear holding of these cases, petitioners’ counsel argued in his
brief that section 1391 permits this court to subject the respondents to jurisdiction
on this basis.

1 It is clear, then, that because there is no showing or allegation that any
2 named respondent is within the territorial jurisdiction of the Central District of
3 California, this court lacks jurisdiction to issue the writ requested by petitioners.
4 It is also true, however, that in cases where the petitioner’s direct custodian is
5 outside the territorial jurisdiction of the court where the petition is filed,
6 jurisdiction does lie in a district court where anyone in the “chain of command”
7 with control over the petitioner is present. *Ex Parte Hayes*, 414 U.S. 1327, 1328,
8 94 S. Ct. 23, 24 (1973); *cf. Kinnell v. Warner*, 356 F. Supp. 779, 782 (D. Hawaii
9 1973) (“Anyone in the ‘chain of command’ with control over petitioner’s
10 whereabouts is that petitioner’s proper custodian for habeas purposes.”). Here,
11 petitioners have named as respondents several individuals who are custodians of
12 the detainees, either because they are directly responsible for their detention or
13 are within the “chain of command” of those directly responsible. At least some of
14 those respondents are present within the territorial jurisdiction of the District
15 Court for the District of Columbia. If the federal court in that district can exercise
16 jurisdiction over this petition, federal law, at least in this circuit, mandates not
17 dismissal, but transfer to that court.

18 Whenever a civil action is filed in a court . . . and that court finds
19 that there is a want of jurisdiction, the court shall, if it is in the
20 interest of justice, transfer such action . . . to any other such court
21 in which the action or appeal could have been brought at the time
22 it was filed or noticed

23 28 U.S.C. § 1631.

24 In *Miller v. Hambrick*, 905 F. 2d 259 (9th Cir. 1990), the Court
25 of Appeals stated,

26 Normally, transfer will be in the interest of justice because
27 normally dismissal of an action that could be brought elsewhere
28 is “time-consuming and justice defeating.”...[This approach] was
adapted to habeas corpus in applying 28 U.S.C. § 2241(d), the
provision to habeas corpus in a State which contains two or more
judicial districts...Now under 28 U.S.C. § 1631 the same approach
can be taken generally in habeas corpus proceedings...

Id. at 262 (citations omitted).

1 In *Cruz-Aguilera v. INS*, 245 F.3d 1070, 1073-74 (9th Cir. 2001), the Court
2 of Appeals cited the above language from *Miller* and added that “[b]ecause the
3 statute’s language is mandatory, federal courts should consider transfer without
4 motion by the parties.”

5 Transfer to the United States District Court for the District of Columbia is
6 appropriate if three conditions are met: (1) the transferring court lacks
7 jurisdiction; (2) the transferee court could have exercised jurisdiction at the time
8 the action was filed; and (3) the transfer is in the interest of justice. *Id.* As to
9 condition (1), this Court has already found that it lacks jurisdiction. As to
10 condition (3), a court is required to construe a habeas petition in the light most
11 favorable to the petitioners. That requires this court to assume, without actually
12 finding, that the allegations in this petition that the detainees’ rights have been
13 violated are true. Construing the petition that way, transfer would be in the
14 interests of justice, for it would avoid a “time-consuming” and “justice-
15 defeating” dismissal. *Miller*, 905 F.2d at 262 (quoting *Goldlawr, Inc. v. Heiman*,
16 369 U.S. 463, 467, 82 S. Ct. 913 (1962)).

17 What remains for determination, therefore, is whether even though
18 respondents are within the jurisdiction of another court - - the District of
19 Columbia - - that court (or *any* federal court) has the authority to exercise
20 jurisdiction over the parties and claims asserted in this petition. It is to that
21 question that the Court will now turn.

22 V.

23 **NO DISTRICT COURT HAS JURISDICTION OVER THIS PETITION**

24 A. ***Johnson v. Eisentrager* Compels Dismissal If the Detainees Are Outside** 25 **the Sovereign Territory of the United States.**

26 As this Court suggested in its previous order, the key case is *Johnson v.*
27 *Eisentrager*, 339 U.S. 763, 70 S. Ct. 936 (1950). Because the Supreme Court’s
28 holding in *Johnson* is controlling here, the decision warrants careful review.

1 In *Johnson*, Mr. Justice Jackson described “the ultimate question” as “one
2 of jurisdiction of civil courts of the United States vis-a-vis military authorities in
3 dealing with enemy aliens overseas.” *Id.* at 765. The case arose out of World
4 War II. The habeas petitioners were twenty-one German nationals who claimed
5 to have been working in Japan for “civilian agencies of the German government”
6 before Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945. They were taken into custody by
7 the United States Army and convicted by a United States Military Commission of
8 violating laws of war by engaging in continued military activity in Japan after
9 Germany’s surrender, but before Japan surrendered.¹¹ The Military Commission
10 sat in China with the consent of the Chinese government. After trial and
11 conviction there, the prisoners were repatriated to Germany to serve their
12 sentences in a prison whose custodian was an American Army officer. While in
13 Germany, the petitioners filed a writ of habeas corpus claiming that their right
14 under the Fifth Amendment to due process, other unspecified rights under the
15 Constitution and laws of the United States and provisions of the Geneva
16 Convention governing prisoners of war all had been violated. *Id.* at 765-767.
17 They sought the same relief as petitioners here: that they be produced before the
18 federal district court to have their custody justified and then be released. They
19 named as respondents the prison commandant, the Secretary of Defense and
20 others in the civilian and military chain of command.

21 Reversing the Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court in *Johnson* upheld the
22 district court’s dismissal of the petition on the ground that petitioners had no
23 basis for invoking federal judicial power in any district. *Id.* at 790-91. In
24 reaching that conclusion, the Supreme Court stated the following:

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27 ¹¹ The Supreme Court has “characterized as ‘well-established’ the power of
28 the military to exercise jurisdiction over...enemy belligerents, prisoners of war or
others charged with violating the laws of war.” *Johnson*, 339 U.S. at 286 (citations
deleted).

- 1 • “[T]he privilege of litigation has been extended to aliens,
2 whether friendly or enemy, only because permitting their
3 presence in the country implied protection. No such basis can
4 be invoked here, for these prisoners at no relevant time were
5 within any territory over which the United States is *sovereign*
6 and the circumstances of their offense [and] their capture . . .
7 were all beyond the territorial jurisdiction of any court of the
8 United States.” *Id.* at 777-78 (emphasis added).¹²
- 9 • “We are cited to no instance where a court, in this or any other
10 country where the writ is known, has issued it on behalf of an
11 alien enemy who, at no relevant time and in no stage of his
12 captivity, has been within its territorial jurisdiction. Nothing
13 in the text of the Constitution extends such a right, nor does
14 anything in our statutes.” *Id.* at 767.
- 15 • “A basic consideration in habeas corpus practice is that the
16 prisoner will be produced before the court. . . .To grant the
17 writ to these prisoners might mean that our army must
18 transport them across the seas for hearing The writ, since
19 it is . . . [argued] to be a matter of right, would be equally
20 available to enemies during active hostilities. . . . Such trials
21 would hamper the war effort It would be difficult to
22 devise more effective fettering of a field commander than to
23 allow the very enemies he is ordered to reduce to submission

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25 ¹² In emphasizing the importance of sovereignty, the Court distinguished its
26 earlier decision in *In re Yamashita*, 327 U.S. 1, 66 S. Ct. 340 (1946). There, a
27 Japanese general convicted by an American Military Commission in the Philippines,
28 challenged the authority of the Commission to try him. The Supreme Court denied
his habeas petition on the merits. The *Johnson* court noted that, unlike the status of
Guantanamo (*see infra*), the United States had “sovereignty” over the Philippines at
the time, which is why Yamashita was entitled to access to the courts. *Id.* at 781.

1 to call him to account in his own civil courts and divert his
2 efforts and attention from the military offensive abroad to the
3 legal defensive at home...” *Id.* at 778-79.

4 Although there has been no decision since *Johnson* that involves facts
5 comparable to those in this case, other courts have either followed *Johnson* or
6 acknowledged its precedential authority. *See, e.g., Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S.
7 678, 121 S. Ct. 2491, 2500 (2001) (“It is well established that certain
8 constitutional protections available to persons inside the United States are
9 unavailable to aliens outside of our geographic borders. *See, United States v.*
10 *Verdugo-Urquidez*, 494 U.S. 259, 269, 273-275, 110 S. Ct 1056 (1990) (Fifth
11 Amendment’s protections do *not* extend to aliens outside the territorial
12 boundaries); *Johnson v. Eisentrager*, 339 U.S. 763, 784 (same).”) In *Verdugo-*
13 *Urquidez, supra*, the Supreme Court also cited *Johnson* (494 U.S. at 273) and
14 added, “If there are to be restrictions on searches and seizures of aliens outside of
15 the United States which occur incident to . . . American action [abroad], they must
16 be imposed by the political branches through diplomatic understanding, treaty or
17 legislation.” *Verdugo-Urquidez, supra*, 494 U.S. at 275.

18 In all key respects, the Guantanamo detainees are like the petitioners in
19 *Johnson*: They are aliens; they were enemy combatants; they were captured in
20 combat; they were abroad when captured; they are abroad now; since their
21 capture, they have been under the control of only the military; they have not
22 stepped foot on American soil; and there are no legal or judicial precedents
23 entitling them to pursue a writ of habeas corpus in an American civilian court.
24 Moreover, there are sound practical reasons, such as legitimate security concerns,
25 that make it unwise for this or any court to take the unprecedented step of
26 conferring such a right on these detainees.

27 Petitioners nevertheless argue that *Johnson* “is both factually and legally
28 inapposite for numerous reasons.” Petitioners’ first supposed distinction is that in

1 *Johnson* the petitioners already had been given access to American courts. Not
2 so; the tribunal in *Johnson* was a Military Commission functioning in China; the
3 petitioners there, as here, were seeking to get *into* a federal court.¹³ Next,
4 petitioners argue that there are issues of fact that underlie jurisdiction which must
5 be resolved before dismissal. Petitioners do not state what those supposed issues
6 are and in any event the question before this court *is* a purely legal one, as in
7 *Johnson*. Finally, as petitioners put it, “[m]ost importantly the detainees are
8 ‘present’ in the United States of America, because Guantanamo Naval Base is, as
9 a matter of both fact and law, the United States of America.” (Response, p.15).

10 Petitioners’ last argument requires the Court to assess the legal and
11 juridical status of the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base.

12 B. **Detainees were seized and at all times have been held outside the**
13 **sovereign territory of the United States.**

14 *Johnson* establishes that whether the Guantanamo detainees can establish
15 jurisdiction in any district court depends not on the nature of their claims but on
16 whether the Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay is under the sovereignty of the
17 United States. Petitioners argue that the detainees are now within the territorial
18 jurisdiction of the United States and thus are entitled to a writ of habeas corpus.

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21 ¹³ It appears that the Guantanamo detainees will also be subjected to trial
22 before military commission. On November 13, 2001, the President issued an
23 Executive Order entitling members of Al Qaeda and other individuals associated
24 with international terrorism who are under the control of the Secretary of Defense
25 to be tried before “one or more military commissions” that will be governed by
26 “rules for the conduct of the proceedings . . . [and] which shall at a minimum provide
27 for . . . a full and fair trial, with the military commission sitting as the triers of both
28 fact and law. . . .” *See* Detention, Treatment and Trial of Certain Non-Citizens in the
War Against Terrorism, 66 Fed. Register 57,833 (November 13, 2001). Thus, it
appears that the detainees are similar to the petitioners in *Johnson* in this respect,
too.

1 But there is a difference between territorial jurisdiction and sovereignty, and it is
2 the latter concept that is key. *See United States v. Spelar*, 338 U.S. 217, 70 S. Ct.
3 10, 11 (1949), in which the Supreme Court observed, “We know of no more
4 accurate phrase in common English usage than ‘foreign country’ to denote
5 territory subject to the sovereignty of another nation.” The Court finds that
6 Guantanamo Bay is *not* within the sovereign territory of the United States and
7 therefore rejects petitioners’ argument.

8 The legal status of Guantanamo Bay is governed by a lease agreement
9 entered into by the United States and Cuba in 1903 and extended by those
10 countries in 1934. *See Lease to the United States of Lands in Cuba for Coaling*
11 *and Naval Stations*, Feb. 16-23, 1903, U.S.-Cuba, T.S. No. 418 (“Lease
12 Agreement”); *Treaty Between the United States of America and Cuba Defining*
13 *Their Relations*, May 29, 1934, art. III, 48 Stat. 1682, 1683. The 1903 agreement
14 provides that the United States shall lease Guantanamo Bay from the Republic of
15 Cuba for use as a coaling or naval station. Lease Agreement, art. I. Article III of
16 the 1934 Treaty provides that the 1903 lease shall “continue in effect” until the
17 parties agree to modify or abrogate it.

18 As to the legal status of Guantanamo Bay so long as it is leased to the U.S.,
19 the 1903 agreement states:

20 While on the one hand the United States recognizes the
21 continuance of the ultimate sovereignty of the Republic of Cuba
22 over the above described areas of land and water, on the other
23 hand the Republic of Cuba consents that during the period of
24 occupation by the United States of said areas under the terms of
25 this agreement the United States shall exercise complete
26 jurisdiction and control over and within said areas.

27 Lease Agreement, art. III.

28 It is telling that in their brief petitioners do not even mention the first
clause of the 1903 agreement, which provides that Cuba explicitly retained
sovereignty. The omission suggests that they realize that sovereignty is the
dispositive issue.

1 Relying instead only on the second clause, petitioners argue that because
2 the Lease Agreement provides that Guantanamo Bay is under the “complete
3 jurisdiction and control” of the United States, the detainees effectively are being
4 held within United States territory and thus are entitled to the writ of habeas
5 corpus.

6 One need only read the lease to realize that petitioners’ argument that
7 “jurisdiction and control” is equivalent to “sovereignty” is wrong. The agreement
8 explicitly distinguishes between the two in providing that Cuba retains
9 “sovereignty” whereas “jurisdiction and control” are exercised by the United
10 States. Cuba and the United States defined the legal status of Guantanamo Bay,
11 and this court has no basis, much less authority, to ignore their determination.
12 *Vermilya-Brown Co. v. Connell*, 335 U.S. 377, 380, 69 S.Ct. 140 (1948). (“[T]he
13 determination of sovereignty over an area is for the legislative and executive
14 departments.”).

15 In addition to the express terms of the Lease Agreement, the only federal
16 courts that have addressed the issue have held that Guantanamo Bay is not within
17 the sovereign territory of the United States and is not the functional equivalent of
18 United States sovereign territory. In *Cuban American Bar Assoc. v. Christopher*,
19 43 F. 3d 1412, 1425 (11th Cir. 1995), *cert. denied*, 515 U.S. 1142, 115 S. Ct. 2578
20 and 516 U.S. 913, 116 S. Ct. 299 (1995), the Eleventh Circuit had to determine
21 whether Cuban and Haitian migrants temporarily detained at the Guantanamo Bay
22 Naval Base could assert rights under various United States statutes and the United
23 States Constitution. *Cuban American Bar Assoc.*, 43 F. 3d at 1421. Citing the
24 language of the Lease Agreement quoted above, the Court of Appeals stated “the
25 district court erred in concluding that Guantanamo Bay was a ‘United States
26 territory.’ We disagree that control and jurisdiction is equivalent to sovereignty.”
27 *Id.* at 1425. The Court of Appeals then went on to reject the argument that
28 United States military bases which are leased abroad and remain under the

1 sovereignty of foreign nations are “‘functionally equivalent’ to being . . . within
2 the United States.” *Id. See also Bird v. United States*, 923 F. Supp. 338, 342-43
3 (D. Conn. 1996) (holding that sovereignty over Guantanamo Bay rested with
4 Cuba and therefore plaintiff’s tort claim was barred under the “foreign country”
5 exception of the Federal Tort Claims Act). The court finds the analyses and
6 conclusions of these courts persuasive.¹⁴

7 For the foregoing reasons, the court finds that sovereignty over
8 Guantanamo Bay remains with Cuba. The court therefore holds that petitioners’
9 claim that the Guantanamo detainees are entitled to a writ of habeas corpus is
10 foreclosed by the Supreme Court’s holding in *Johnson*.

11 VI.

12 CONCLUSION

13 The Court understands that many concerned citizens, here and abroad,
14 believe this case presents the question of whether the Guantanamo detainees have
15 any rights at all that the United States is bound, or willing, to recognize. That
16 question is *not* before this Court and nothing in this ruling suggests that the
17 captives are entitled to no legal protection whatsoever. For this Court is
18 not holding that these prisoners have no right which the military
19 authorities are bound to respect. The United States, by the [1949]

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21 ¹⁴ The cases on which petitioners mainly rely to avoid this result do not
22 support their arguments. *United States v. Corey*, 232 F.3d 1166 (9th Cir. 2000), not
23 a habeas case, merely reached the unexceptional conclusion that federal courts have
24 jurisdiction over a criminal case charging a *United States citizen* with offenses
25 committed at United States installations abroad. *Cobb v. United States*, 191 F.2d
26 604 (9th Cir. 1951) does not hold - - indeed, rejected the view - - that America’s
27 exclusive control over the Guantanamo Naval Base constitutes *de jure* sovereignty;
28 Okinawa, not Guantanamo Bay, was at issue in *Cobb* and the court found that *de jure*
sovereignty over Okinawa had *not* passed to the United States, so Okinawa was still
a “foreign country” within the meaning of the Federal Tort Claims Act. *Id.* at 608.
Finally, the judgment in *Haitian Centers Council, Inc. v. McNary*, 969 F.2d 1326 (2d
Cir. 1992) was vacated by the Supreme Court in *Sale v. Haitian Centers Council,
Inc.*, 509 U.S. 918, 113 S.Ct. 3028 (1993).

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Geneva Convention . . . concluded an agreement upon the treatment to be accorded captives. These prisoners claim to be and are entitled to its protection. It is, however, the obvious scheme of the Agreement that responsibility for observance and enforcement of these rights is upon political and military authorities. Rights of alien enemies are vindicated under it only through protests and intervention of protecting powers as the rights of our citizens against foreign governments are vindicated only by Presidential intervention.

Johnson, 339 U.S. at 789.¹⁵

For the foregoing reasons, the Verified Petition For Writ of Habeas Corpus and the Verified First Amended Petition are both DISMISSED with prejudice.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: February ____, 2002

A. HOWARD MATZ
United States District Judge

¹⁵ The President recently declared that the United States will apply the rules of the Geneva Convention to at least some of the detainees. *See* “U.S. Will Apply Geneva Rules to Taliban Fighters,” Los Angeles Times, February 8, 2002 at A1.