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CONTACT:
Sue Walitsky 202-224-4524 or
202-320-0819 (cell)

CARDIN PRAISES PRESIDENT OBAMA'S DECISION TO CLOSE GITMO, BAN TORTURE

Washington, DC — U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), a member of the Senate Judiciary and Foreign Relations Committees, and incoming Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, made the following statement today in response to President Obama's executive orders regarding Guantánamo Bay and U.S. detention and interrogation policies:

"I commend President Obama for issuing his executive orders today to close the detention center at Guantánamo Bay and prohibiting the use of torture against detainees. President Obama is sending a clear message to the world that we are re-establishing the rule of law in the United States, and that we, as a nation, will abide by our international obligations.

"As the Senate leader of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, no other concern has been raised with the United States by our colleagues in Europe as often – and in earnest – as the situation in Guantánamo. I look forward to working with the President's new interagency task force, along with our friends and allies, to develop a common coalition approach toward the detention and humane treatment of accused terrorists, as recommended by the 9/11 Commission. As a Congressman I voted against the *Military Commissions Act*, which set up the flawed system of tribunals in Guantánamo Bay that ultimately was rejected by the Supreme Court.

"Today's executive orders also put the Defense Department, the intelligence community, and the Justice Department on the right course. As a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I was disappointed that former Attorney General Michael Mukasey could not bring himself to say that waterboarding is torture. By comparison, Attorney General-designate Eric Holder, during his confirmation hearing, was unequivocal in his repudiation of waterboarding as a practice acceptable to the United States and the civilized world. Time and again, military witnesses have testified before Congress that torture is not an effective method for obtaining information, hurts our efforts to work with our allies, and puts our brave men and women in uniform in greater danger overseas."

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