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December 16, 2014

Liam Dillon
Senior Reporter and Assistant Editor
Voice of San Diego
By email to Liam.Dillon@voiceofsandiego.org

Re: Susumo Azano; Your Email of December 10, 2014

Dear Mr. Dillon:

I have received your email referenced above. The questions that you have posed are almost all related to Mr. Azano's pending criminal case as well as a pending civil litigation in the Southern District of California. Although Mr. Azano has resources not available to many people charged with crime, he still faces the overwhelming might and resources of the Department of Justice ("DOJ"). The advantages enjoyed by the prosecution are evident in their ability to convict even innocent people, as observers of the prosecutions of Senator Ted Stevens and others can attest.

Thus, upon my advice, Mr. Azano will decline to answer any of your questions. He has pled not guilty and looks forward to fighting this case in the courthouse, not in the court of public opinion. However much he would like to answer your questions and immediately prove his innocence he declines to do so in the press.

At first glance, your questions appear unfair, inflammatory, and irresponsible. Nonetheless, I understand your desire to get to the heart of the matter. However, I hope that you recognize that Mr. Azano is a private figure who has never sought out the attention of the media. As I am sure you have noted, despite the numerous government press releases Mr. Azano has issued no press releases.

As a journalist I know you understand your duty to balance the public's need for information against the potential for harm or discomfort. Among other rights, Mr. Azano has the right to a fair trial, and irresponsible press coverage could negatively impact that right. Over time, many inflammatory allegations repeated in the press have disappeared because they were without merit. Repeating them again does nothing but make a trial of Mr. Azano more difficult to defend.

Finally, as you are also well aware, whatever you choose to write, you must report only the truth. Any failure to do so will subject you and your publication to a defamation lawsuit. Furthermore, any unfair negative inference that you publically draw from Mr. Azano's declination of your invitation will likewise subject you and your publication to a lawsuit.

Sincerely,

/s/ Knut S. Johnson
Knut S. Johnson