

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

THE PRESIDENT'S NEW PR OFFENSIVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the President's new PR offensive in Iraq is offensive. The President sent Secretary Rumsfeld to Iraq. He should have sent him to see the Red Cross instead.

This administration remains in denial over the prisoner abuses in Iraq. They think creating a photo op in Iraq will somehow divert attention from the photos that shock the world. Justice is not a PR stunt in Iraq.

The responsibility is not a sound bite from Secretary Rumsfeld telling Americans from Iraq that he is in charge. Accountability is not a mug shot from the prison where policies that shame America spun out of control.

Mr. President, this is a crisis of worldwide scope. Landing on an aircraft, Mr. Speaker, will not help. Standing your guy up in Iraq will not help. Pretending it will go away will not help. Put away the banner, Mr. President, because America is in the midst of a crisis.

We are just beginning to comprehend the magnitude of the abuse at one prison in Iraq, and we are beginning to hear of abuses that may have taken place elsewhere. This PR stunt will be seen around the world as just that, and it will only make matters worse.

Restoring America's credibility in the world will take America confronting this awful thing. The people mugging for the camera are the people who ought to be at the center of a complete and impartial investigation. Anything less will be a cover-up plan in plain sight.

The world simply will not allow it. Every day the questions and comments worldwide get just tougher and tougher.

From the Gulf News, today's editorial is entitled "Inside Afghan's Prisons, U.S. Abuses are Shrouded in Mystery."

Singapore's Straits Times newspaper carries the commentary today entitled "Torture and the Politics of Ambiguity."

I will insert these newspaper articles into the RECORD at this point.

[From the Straits Times, May 13, 2004]

TORTURE AND THE POLITICS OF AMBIGUITY (By Michael Manning)

Each new revelation of physical abuse, maltreatment and sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners by American and British soldiers shocks international public opinion, leaving officials to scramble desperately to contain the damage.

United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld warns that more documentary evi-

dence of wrongdoing at Abu Ghraib prison lies in store, evidently in the preemptive hope that the outrages stopped there.

As a former US military intelligence interrogator, I am convinced that the images from Abu Ghraib are just the beginning. The wanton cruelty there is all too clearly symptomatic of a systemic failure.

But what system failed? Was it a failure of discipline and training—the result of sending inexperienced and unworried reservists into poor conditions, abruptly extending their deployments and then leaving them understaffed in the face of a growing influx of captured insurgents? Or did the pattern of abuse amount to so many orders from superiors to "soften up" prisoners for interrogation?

The answer is, most likely, both and neither.

Ultimately, what gives rise to abuses such as occurred at Abu Ghraib is a policy of deliberate ambiguity concerning how to handle detainees. The pressure in a war setting to get information that could save lives is immense. But senior political and military officials—particularly in democracies—prefer to avoid any association with torture.

Ambiguity is thus a political strategy that encourages the spread of implicit, informal rules of behavior, thereby shifting accountability onto the lowest ranking, least powerful and most expendable soldiers.

I completed the US Army's three-month basic interrogation course in the late 1980s. It was rigorous—only seven of 33 students finished it—as it required mastering the technical minutiae of collecting, cross-checking, standardising and reporting enormous masses of information.

But the curriculum was much less meticulous concerning interrogation techniques. An interrogation, we were instructed, should begin with polite, direct questioning, because a certain number of detainees simply want to unburden themselves. If more persuasion was needed, we could offer rewards for cooperation—anything from cigarettes to political asylum.

Beyond this, we were taught that we could "apply pressure." The term was never defined in any formal setting, but the concept was not difficult to decipher. As US Army General Antonio Taguba's report on the abuses at Abu Ghraib put it, the "guard force" was "actively engaged in setting the conditions for successful exploitation of the internees."

This obvious violation of the Army's rule prohibiting participation by military police in interrogation sessions does not surprise me. I was never taught that military police came under a separate chain of command. On the contrary, between classes, during breaks in field training and in other informal settings, some of our instructors let it be known through insinuation and innuendo that we could have the guards beat uncooperative subjects.

This was never said in the classroom, but it was made clear the role of military police was to serve the interrogators, for an interrogator's effectiveness depends on convincing the detained of his omnipotence.

The hidden rules of the game came closest to being officially acknowledged during two weeks of simulated interrogations towards the end of the training course. These sessions involved only a student interrogator, and instructor in the role of the detainee and a video camera.

When, during a simulation, I asked an imaginary guard to take away the detainee's chair, the instructor feigned being removed violently. When I told the non-existent guard to hit the detainee, the instructor played along. All of us knew that a failed interrogation could mean being dropped from the course. I was not dropped; I finished first in my class.

For those who benefit from the politics of ambiguity, international law is an indispensable prop. In his recent US Senate testimony, Mr. Rumsfeld claimed that the military police at Abu Ghraib were instructed to abide by the Geneva conventions.

So was I. Throughout my training as an interrogator, the admonition to follow the Geneva conventions accompanied virtually every discussion of "applying pressure." Unfortunately, like "applying pressure," the Geneva conventions were never defined. We never studied them, nor were we given a copy to read, much less tested on their contents. For many of us, the conventions were at best a dimly remembered cliché from war movies that meant, "don't do bad stuff."

Again, the tacit rules said otherwise. One instructor joked that although the Geneva conventions barred firing a 50-caliber machine gun at an enemy soldier, we could aim at his helmet or backpack, since these were "equipment." Others shared anecdotes about torturing detainees.

Whether such talk was true is irrelevant. We were being conditioned to believe that the official rules set no clear limits, and that we could therefore set the limits wherever we liked.

In the end, the politics of ambiguity may fail Mr. Rumsfeld; all those high-resolution photographs from Abu Ghraib are anything but ambiguous. If similarly shameful disclosures multiply, as I believe they will, let us at least hope that official apologies and condemnations may finally give way to wider, more genuine accountability and reform.

[From the Gulf News, May 13, 2004]

FARHAN BOKHARI: INSIDE AFGHAN PRISONS, US ABUSES ARE SHROUDED IN MYSTERY

The scandalous treatment of Iraqi prisoners by United States military personnel and the series of condemnations surrounding key US officials, most notably Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, are too significant to be ignored easily. But one essential danger flowing from recent revelations surrounding the actions of American military personnel in Iraq is that similar mistreatment of prisoners in US custody in Afghanistan could have occurred on the same proportion. And perhaps this was easily overlooked.

The bottom line remains that the world's so-called sole superpower, eager to sermonise the rest of the world over principles of democracy and basic human values, now finds itself confronting fundamentally tough questions over the very same values—which have theoretically stood at the heart of its policy-making.

How can the US lead the world if its actions cause more inhumanity than the protection of humanity? There are no easy answers to that fundamentally significant question. To make matters worse, a number of Afghan and Pakistani families related to the fighters nabbed during the Afghan war and subsequently taken to Guantanamo Bay, are completely in the dark about the fate of their near and dear ones.

The fate of the prisoners captured by the US in Afghanistan will not only continue to haunt the region surrounding the central Asian country but indeed the rest of the world. Vociferous criticism of US treatment of Iraqi prisoners is only gathering fresh momentum.

For many critics, no amount of denunciation of Washington's policies can ever compensate for the suffering endured by a large number of victims, thanks to the failure in enforcing stringent codes of conduct. The fallout from the Iraqi prisoners issue across the Muslim world will also carry its reverberations to Afghanistan, where many Afghans remain skeptical about Washington's

ability to give their country a new lease of life. For such sceptics, the Iraqi prisoners issue triggers a two pronged painful question.

On the one hand, this controversy raises the issue of the treatment of Afghan prisoners, whose fate remains hidden from the world.

It is only the word of the US military and other authorities which suggests that living conditions for Afghan prisoners remain acceptable. But there's absolutely no way to independently verify such claims.

On the other hand, the Iraqi prisoners' issue reinforces not only the message that the US remains—fundamentally—a country which is hostile towards the Muslim world, but also one whose actions only aggravate global crises rather than provide solutions for them. At a global level, the fallout from the Iraqi prisoners issue would be hard to pacify without a clear-cut demonstration of political consequences through steps such as US President Bush asking Rumsfeld to step down.

Without a clear message which suggests that this case has sparked enough urgency in Washington that heads are beginning to roll, the bitterness across the Muslim world will not even begin to pacify.

On the ground, in a country like Afghanistan, there's a great urgency to quickly establish new parameters to ensure transparency surrounding prisoners in different jails, be they those in the custody of the US or those being held by one of its allies. Apart from taking such vital measures regarding the treatment of prisoners in Afghanistan, Washington also needs to move decisively towards beginning to resolve the issue of prisoners incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay.

Simultaneously, Washington's determination to build a new political order in Afghanistan dominated by its handpicked leaders also needs to be fundamentally reviewed.

While there may not appear to be any direct clash between the prisoners issue and the political future of Afghanistan, the two issues are not entirely unconnected. For many sceptics who look upon the US as an invading power, both trends appear driven by the determination to enforce brute authority. The prisoners on their own, suspected to be living in sub-human conditions, may not be able to challenge Washington's military authority. But there are many others who would continue to be bitter about the US, drawing inspiration from Washington's controversial action.

Through time, such bitterness and anger will only translate into hostility towards the US. To make matters worse in Afghanistan, Washington's failure to pour billions of dollars once expected by most Afghans will only begin to lay the basis for frustration with the US as a problem solver. Tragically though, Afghanistan may be fated to live through one of its worst periods of recurring turmoil between now and the end of the year, ahead of the US presidential elections.

In its zeal to quickly solve the security problems central to Afghanistan's past profile as a terrorist state, the US military, with or without Washington's tacit direction, may well intensify its search for so-called terrorists.

In doing so, it's likely to run up against one wall or another.

Perhaps, the search for terrorists may intensify the urgency to step up the so-called interrogations of prisoners caught in the Afghan war.

The worst in the saga surrounding prisoners in the US military's captivity may not be over yet.

The BBC asked viewers and listeners to comment. From South Africa came

this: "The U.S. Secretary of Shame should just do the honorable thing and resign."

From Switzerland: "Rumsfeld is the apex of an arrogant military lobby in the U.S., a bunch of people who have no concern for human rights, freedom, liberty and moral values which were seen as the inseparable ideology of the United States."

From England: "Bush's administration has brought anarchy not democracy."

In Iraq today, Secretary Rumsfeld called himself a survivor as he spoke to the soldiers. This is the typical administration technique. Say something over and over and over and hope the people will begin to believe it. Fly a banner, take a picture, hope it all goes away.

The Secretary of War should have been talking about how America's credibility can survive this administration. Secretary Rumsfeld should have been talking about how America's leadership can survive the neo-cons. The Secretary should have been talking about how our men and women in Iraq can survive the new dangers they face.

It is too much to ask, I know. The PR machine cannot grasp anything as obvious as worldwide outrage. They call it a focus group. Meanwhile, they will do everything possible to prop up Rumsfeld, even as he comes to symbolize a disastrous foreign policy.

Today, Secretary Rumsfeld runs the DOD, but it no longer stands for the Department of Defense. Under this administration, under this Secretary, DOD has come to mean "divert or deny." The world sees it. The world knows it. The administration just does not get it yet. November 2 is coming.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. McCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the 5 minutes of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Kansas?

There was no objection.

IT IS TIME TO CHANGE THE STATUS QUO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, over the last generation, Congress has acted with good intentions; but it has resulted in bad consequences. We have

developed, through policy here on the floor of the House over the past generation, policies that have driven jobs offshore. We have forced costs on employers that they are unable to control, and they do not even get a vote, and the result, a loss of jobs and a loss of the American dream for those who want those jobs and a successful career.

I was speaking recently with the CEO of Raytheon Corporation in Wichita, Kansas; and we were talking about a wire harness shop. He had worked with his machinists union and tried to develop a way to keep that shop within the Raytheon Corporation. He realized after several tries that even if wages were at zero he would still be forced to move these jobs overseas in order to remain competitive. The reason these costs were driving jobs overseas was not because of the wages. It was because of the higher cost imposed by Congress over the last generation through their policies.

I spoke with the CEO of Convergys. He told me that it was about the same to build a building in New Delhi or in Manila or in Wichita, Kansas. Overhead, in other words, is about the same around the globe.

So if it is not wages and it is not overhead, Mr. Speaker, what is it that is driving up costs that CEOs have no control over and is forcing our jobs overseas? Well, we have looked at these costs, and we have decided it is time to change this environment that is keeping jobs from coming back to America. It is time we changed the status quo.

We found out that these costs can be divided into eight separate categories, and we have developed eight issues; and for this week and the seven weeks that follow, we are going to attempt to change that environment, and I believe the change is coming.

The first of these issues is health care security. These are costs that are driven by an increase of regulation, increase of lawsuits, increase of mismanagement from the Federal level; and the result has been a 12 percent increase in the growth of health care costs just this past year. This is now the sixth year where we have had double-digit growth in health care costs, and it has forced health care costs to double since 1999.

It has raised the number of uninsured in America. So this week, we passed association health plans which allowed associations to gather together and lower their health care costs by bargaining with a larger number of people.

We passed flexible savings accounts so that employees could save money for health care costs and become more involved in health care decisions and shop around for health care services, reducing the cost and increasing the number of people on the insured rolls.

We also limited medical malpractice costs by medical malpractice reform. That alone will increase the number of insured by almost 4 million Americans.

We also found out there is a second issue, and one we are going to be addressing next week is the costs that are