

Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 26 July 2007

Thank you Mr. Chairman for the invitation to speak before this body and thank you for your leadership in this matter.

I am Paul D. Eaton, retired now 18 months from the United States Army in the rank of Major General. My last operational assignment was Commander of the organization charged with the mission to rebuild the Iraqi Security Forces, from 2003 to 2004.

My remarks will address this administration's policies regarding torture, the Geneva Conventions, Military Commissions, Habeas Corpus, extraordinary rendition and secret detention and their impact upon the American Soldier, the United States Army and Marine Corps and the United States.

Good order and discipline.

Within days of an American Soldier's arrival on active duty, training begins to shape him for the difficult duty to fight and win the Nation's wars. He is developed physically, intellectually and morally.

Within the moral component, we have always stressed the proper treatment of Prisoner's of War, including the so-called 5 S's – seize, secure, separate, safeguard and speed to the rear. We have recently emphasized the proper and prudent behaviors at the point of capture. The legal discussion where some would deliver different treatment because of technical POW status is simply not warranted.

For our Soldiers to hear their Vice President say on radio that a "dunk in the water" is a "no brainer" if it can save lives, is a threat to the good order and discipline of our Armed Forces. Water boarding is not safeguarding a prisoner, regardless of the conditions of their capture. To hear our CIA describe water boarding as a "professional interrogation technique" is at once appalling and confusing to our men and women under arms.

The good order and discipline of our Armed Forces begins with our Commander in Chief and must weave through the entire rank structure. The President must set the tone for our youngest Private Soldier and the administration's policies today do not set the right tone. This is not a natural event – our men and women arrive in the Armed Forces with a strong Judeo-Christian ethic to do the right thing. And we pride ourselves in returning a good man or woman back to civilian life a better person than they were before putting on the American uniform.

I am convinced that the disaster of Abu Ghraib is directly attributable to, among other factors, administration policies on detainee treatment.

Isolation of the American Soldier.

When the drama of Abu Ghraib hit the news, my senior Iraqi advisor, now the second in command of the Iraqi Armed Forces and a secular Shia, came into my office with his

hands outstretched and the question, “How can this be?” The immediate and profound impact on me and my mission was serious – I had lost face before my Iraqi Soldiers and no amount of explanation could overcome the images of the hooded man and electrodes.

The United States has enjoyed until recently a wonderful reputation for humanitarian excellence ably imaged by the Statue of Liberty. Today, it is difficult to lecture our Iraqi Soldiers, let alone the Chinese, the Russians or anyone else, on human rights abuses.

Our Soldiers became more isolated from our allies, we undoubtedly lost allies in the fight for Iraq, because of our policies on extraordinary rendition, secret detention and the use of torture. The French Army has yet to recover from the images of genital electric shock used during the Battle of Algiers.

Indeed, the risk of attack against the American Soldier increased.

These are different times...

Indeed, we are in different times. And at no more important time, while we are at war with ideologues, do we need to display the strong moral code that has set the United States apart from so many other nations.

The ticking time bomb...

Jack Bauer gets a lot of press on his solutions to the threats to our Nation. Recently, his performance under the pressure of the ticking time bomb scenario was favorably received by many people, with criminal behavior excused for the greater good. Ladies and Gentlemen, as a retired Marine four star general observed, Squad Leaders in Iraq are faced with the ‘ticking time bomb’ scenario every day. Do we want our Soldiers and Marines playing Jack Bauer?

At a recent Republican candidate debate, Senator McCain demonstrated the moral courage to reject the use of torture. He was the only man on that stage to do so. Rejected on the basis that it is immoral and doesn’t work. As one man stated, the only thing you are sure of with torture is that pain is involved – the information you get may waste your time or worse. Senator McCain understands that the exception does become the rule, leading him to author the McCain Amendment designed to ban cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Recently, Human Rights First invited our Presidential candidates to sit down with a group of retired general officers to hear them discuss the impact of some of these policies on the military. Our distinguished Chairman today was among the three candidates to accept the invitation. For me, the most compelling story was by a retired Marine Major General, who described the capture of a Japanese Soldier, subsequent appropriate treatment and eventual windfall of information and help.

That is the real story for our troops and our civilian leadership.

