

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Event: PPRC Friday Rally celebrates victory for civil rights in Portland, praising Mayor and City Council for withdrawal from PJTTF.

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Time: 5:00 p.m.

Place: Pioneer Courthouse Square

PPRC Friday Rally celebrates victory for civil rights in Portland, praising Mayor and City Council for withdrawal from PJTTF.

The *Portland Peaceful Response Coalition's* Friday rally and march mark a major victory for civil rights this week in Portland, congratulating and thanking the Mayor and City Council for voting to withdraw from the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force. "As Mayor and Police Commissioner it is only reasonable that Mayor Potter and the City Attorney be granted security clearance equivalent to the deputized officers," explained Jody Heatlie, a PPRC volunteer who regularly attends the Friday rallies. "I am happy that he wants to protect the citizens and Oregon State law." After weeks of negotiations and a final refusal by the FBI to grant the Mayor and City Attorney the security clearance needed to allow adequate oversight of the activities of deputized officers, the Mayor decided to withdraw from the FBI task force. The city council voted to approve the withdrawal last night.

"The problems with the Bush administration are many and include using fear and exaggerations about the so-called 'war on terror' in order to put forward their political agenda of control," said Heatlie. "It includes attacks on civil liberties, lying to get us into a war, way too much secrecy and lack of accountability." Heatlie said that she believes Mayor Potter is concerned with these issues. "You can't know how many of us are relieved to have such a new mayor," said Heatlie. "Frankly, there were members of the old City Council who just did not listen to the citizens and we are much happier with the new City Council." Heatlie said that if more people knew the unsavory history of the FBI there would be even more support of the Mayor's decision.

Also to be discussed at the Friday rally will be the call by *Human Rights Watch* for a "special prosecutor to investigate the culpability of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and ex-CIA Director George Tenet in cases of detainee torture and abuse."¹

1. "Rumsfeld faces calls for criminal investigation into detainee torture", by Raymond Whitaker, 24 April 2005 - Independent (UK). Also see Human Rights Watch webpage at www.hrw.org

TEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH PRESS RELEASE

U.S.: Investigate Rumsfeld, Tenet for Torture

(New York, April 24, 2005)—The United States should name a special prosecutor to investigate the culpability of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and ex-CIA Director George Tenet in cases of detainee torture and abuse, Human Rights Watch said in releasing a new report today.

The report, *Getting Away with Torture? Command Responsibility for the U.S. Abuse of Detainees*, is issued on the eve of the first anniversary of the publication of the Abu Ghraib photos (April 28). It presents substantial evidence warranting criminal investigations of Rumsfeld and Tenet, as well as Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, formerly the top U.S. commander in Iraq, and Gen. Geoffrey Miller the former commander of the prison camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

“The soldiers at the bottom of the chain are taking the heat for Abu Ghraib and torture around the world, while the guys at the top who made the policies are going scot free,” said Reed Brody, special counsel for Human Rights Watch. “That’s simply not right.”

Human Rights Watch said that there was now overwhelming evidence that U.S. mistreatment and torture of Muslim prisoners took place not merely at Abu Ghraib but at facilities throughout Afghanistan and Iraq as well as at Guantánamo and at “secret locations” around the world, in violation of the Geneva Conventions and the laws against torture.

“This pattern of abuse across several countries did not result from the acts of individual soldiers who broke the rules,” said Brody. “It resulted from decisions made by senior U.S. officials to bend, ignore, or cast rules aside.”

Among Human Rights Watch’s findings:

>>>> Secretary Rumsfeld should be investigated for potential liability in war crimes and torture by US troops in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantánamo under the doctrine of “command responsibility”—the legal principle that holds a superior responsible for crimes committed by his subordinates when he knew or should have known that they were being committed but fails to take reasonable measures to stop them. Secretary Rumsfeld approved interrogation techniques which violated the Geneva Conventions and the Convention against Torture, such as the use of guard dogs to frighten prisoners and painful “stress” positions. There is no evidence that, over a three-year period of mounting reports of abuse, Rumsfeld exerted his authority and warned those under his command that the mistreatment of prisoners must stop. Had he done so, many of the crimes committed by U.S. forces certainly could have been avoided.

>>>> Under George Tenet’s direction, and reportedly with his specific authorization, the CIA has “rendered” detainees to countries where they were tortured, making Tenet potentially liable as an accomplice to torture. The CIA has also “disappeared” detainees in secret locations and it is said to have used “waterboarding,” in which the detainee’s head is pushed under water until he believes he will drown, also reportedly with Tenet’s authorization.

>>>> Gen. Sanchez approved illegal interrogation methods—again, including the use of guard dogs to frighten prisoners—which were then applied by soldiers at Abu Ghraib. Gen. Sanchez does not appear to have intervened to stop the commission of war crimes and torture by soldiers under his direct command.

>>>> Gen. Miller, as commander at the tightly-controlled prison camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, may bear responsibility for war crimes and acts of torture there. He may also bear responsibility for bringing illegal abusive interrogation tactics to Iraq.

Despite this evidence, Human Rights Watch said, the United States has deliberately shielded the architects of illegal detention policies through the refusal to allow an independent inquiry of prisoner abuse and the failure to undertake criminal investigations against those leaders who allowed the widespread criminal abuse of detainees to develop and persist. Rather, the Department of Defense has established a plethora of investigations, all but one in-house, looking down the chain of command. Prosecutions have commenced only against low-level soldiers and contractors.

“A year after Abu Ghraib, the United States continues to do what dictatorships and banana republics do the world over when their abuses are discovered—cover up the scandal and shift blame downwards,” said Brody. “A wall of immunity surrounds the architects of the policy that led to all these crimes.”

Human Rights Watch requested the appointment of a special prosecutor, saying that because Attorney General Alberto Gonzales was himself deeply involved in the policies leading to these alleged crimes, he had a conflict of interest preventing a proper investigation of detainee abuse. U.S. Department of Justice regulations call for the appointment of an outside counsel when such a conflict exists and the public interest warrants a prosecutor without links to the government.

Human Rights Watch also repeated its call to Congress and the president to establish a special commission, along the lines of the 9/11 Commission, to investigate the issue of prisoner abuse. Such a commission would hold hearings, have full subpoena power, and be empowered to recommend the creation of a special prosecutor to investigate possible criminal offenses, if the attorney general had not yet named one. Although Human Rights Watch said that existing evidence already necessitated criminal investigations, it emphasized that an independent commission could compel evidence that the government has continued to conceal, including the directives reportedly signed by President Bush authorizing the CIA to establish secret detention facilities and facilitating the “rendition” of suspects to brutal regimes.

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