

Most recently, we came together to draft the Military Readiness Enhancement Act, historic legislation to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and replace it with a nondiscrimination policy. Because of SLDN's staunch efforts to win support in Congress, I introduced the bill with more than fifty cosponsors on March 2, 2005. We now have more than eighty cosponsors of this bipartisan bill today.

As SLDN celebrates its national dinner on May 7th, I commend the staff, board, and supporters for their commitment and perseverance. Just as the advocacy of civil rights groups paved the way for desegregation in the military, I am confident that SLDN's hard work will soon lead to the demise of the discriminatory and counterproductive "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

"THE BIG SHOTS WALK"

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2005

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, many Americans continue to be gravely embarrassed by our country's failure to address in a forthright manner the abuse of human rights which occurred at Abu Ghraib prison under our control. Clearly the great majority of Americans who have served in Iraq are innocent of any such pattern of abuse, but it is simply a defiance of common sense and the facts to hold accountable only a handful of low-level military personnel on the scene, while exonerating those in charge who are in various degrees culpable for either encouraging or allowing this to happen.

Bob Herbert's column in the New York Times on April 27 makes this point forcefully, noting that "under Commander in Chief George W. Bush, the notion of command accountability has been discarded. In Mr. Bush's world of war, it's the grunts who take the heat. Punishment is reserved for the people at the bottom. The people who foul up at the top are promoted."

Mr. Speaker, our country deserves better of its leadership, and so do the men and women in the armed services who should not see a small number of their comrades held accountable for their actions while those in charge suffer no such penalty. I ask that Bob Herbert's thoughtful discussion of this matter be printed here.

ON ABU GHRAIB, THE BIG SHOTS WALK

(By Bob Herbert)

When soldiers in war are not properly trained and supervised, atrocities are all but inevitable: This is one reason why the military command structure is so important. There was a time, not so long ago, when commanders were expected to be accountable for the behavior of their subordinates.

That's changed. Under Commander in Chief George W. Bush, the notion of command accountability has been discarded. In Mr. Bush's world of war, it's the grunts who take the heat. Punishment, is reserved for the people at the bottom. The people who foul up at the top are promoted.

It was a year ago today that the stories and photos of the shocking abuses at Abu Ghraib prison first came to the public's attention. It was a scandal that undermined the military's reputation and diminished the standing of the U.S. around the world.

It would soon become clear that the photos of hooded, naked and humiliated detainees were evidence of a much larger problem. The system for processing, interrogating and detaining prisoners at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere in Iraq was dangerously out of control, and the command structure responsible for it had collapsed. Detainees were beaten, tortured, sexually abused and, in some instances, killed. Many detainees should never have been imprisoned at all, as they had committed no offenses.

So what happened? A handful of grunts were court-martialed, a Marine major was cashiered, and the Army plans to issue a new interrogation manual that bars certain harsh techniques. There was no wholesale crackdown on criminal behavior.

We learned last week that after a high-level investigation, the Army had cleared four of the five top officers who were responsible for prison policies and operations in Iraq. The fifth officer, Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski of the Army Reserve, had already been relieved of her command of the military police unit at Abu Ghraib. (She has complained, and not without reason, that she was a scapegoat for the failures of higher-ranking officers.)

As Eric Schmitt wrote in *The Times*: "Barring new evidence, the inquiry by the Army's inspector general effectively closes the Army's book on whether the highest-ranking officers in Iraq during the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, should be held accountable for command failings described in past reviews."

This is the way atrocities are dealt with in Mr. Bush's world of war. The higher-ups responsible for training, supervising and disciplining the troops—in other words, the big shots who presided over a system that ran shamefully amok—escaped virtually unscathed.

The abuses at Abu Ghraib, which seemed mind-boggling at the time, turned out to be symptomatic of the torture, abuse and institutionalized injustice that have permeated the Bush administration's operations in its so-called war against terror. Euphemisms like rendition, coercive interrogation, sleep adjustment and waterboarding are now widely understood. Yes, Virginia, it is the policy of the United States to kidnap individuals and send them off to regimes skilled in the art of torture.

Two things are needed. First, a truly independent commission, along the lines of the bipartisan 9/11 panel, should be set up to thoroughly investigate U.S. interrogation and detention operations and make recommendations to correct abuses.

Second, the U.S. government should make it clear, beyond any doubt, that torture and any other inhumane treatment of prisoners is wrong, just flat wrong, and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

"In our contemporary world, torture is like the slave trade or piracy was to people in the 1790's," said Michael Posner, executive director of Human Rights First, which is suing Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld over the prisoner abuse issue. "Torture is a crime against mankind, against humanity. It's something that has to be absolutely prohibited."

If the president made it clear that men and women up and down the chain of command would be held responsible for the abuses that occur on their watch, the abuses would plummet. Instead, the message the administration has sent is that its demands for accountability will be limited to a few hapless, ill-trained grunts.

The big shots who presided over behavior that has shamed America in the eyes of the world can count on this president's embrace.

IN HONOR OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AICPA'S JOURNAL OF ACCOUNTANCY

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2005

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the Journal of Accountancy, the Journal of record for the accounting profession, on its 100th anniversary this year.

The Journal of Accountancy, which is published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, is read by nearly 400,000 readers each month. Its contents include official releases of technical requirements for CPAs as well as news and information that enlighten readers about important relevant developments in and outside the profession and that enhance their professional competency.

As a CPA, I am keenly aware of the value of this publication. CPAs play a vital role in our economy, and since 1905 the Journal of Accountancy has helped keep them informed about key business trends.

I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution that the JofA has made during its first century and to recognize its editors, authors and art and production staff for their hard work. I extend my best wishes to the JofA for its continued success.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO AND HONORING 75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY BANKING

HON. COLLIN C. PETERSON

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 5, 2005

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, on May 9, 1930, a group of Minnesota community bankers held their first official meeting in Glenwood, Minnesota, in my district. The agenda that day was to focus on how to respond to the broad challenges facing the nation, as well as the specific challenges to community banks—the stock market crash the year before, a nation struggling to get back on its economic feet, a rash of bank foreclosures, and the rapid growth of chain banks.

This meeting of 28 bankers grew from a one-state organization, focused on state issues, into today's Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA), the largest constituency of community banks in the nation. 2005 marks ICBA's 75th anniversary. In 1962 the bankers returned to their original mission and set up the Independent Community Bankers of Minnesota (ICBM), to focus again on issues specific to Minnesota.

This year also denotes a special milestone for the state association, ICBM. Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty proclaimed May 9th Independent Community Bankers of Minnesota Day, commemorating the founding of the only state association that exclusively serves the independent community banking industry.

Initially, industry consolidation and interstate banking heightened the need for legislative representation of community bankers. Today that need remains strong as community banks continue to serve a vital role in our state and