

## **THE EXAMPLE OF MAJOR GARRITY AT CAMPO BUCCA IN SUPPORT OF MORALITY**

Our nation's leaders are currently debating the use of techniques such as "waterboarding" and other coercive techniques which, if not torture, certainly are abusive techniques intended to coerce disclosure of information. It is a basic deprivation of human rights and our Constitution and the Rule of Law. Our institutions, including elected representatives, the media, academia and religion and must reconcile their versions of morality with the practice of prisoner abuse.

In Iraq we have an excellent example that providing human rights even while keeping people prisoner will succeed where abuse and degradation will not. While everyone remembers Abu Ghraib, an equivalent prison camp, Camp Bucca, existed in the south of Iraq near Bucca. In 2003, the early days of the war, Major Stacey Garrity was in charge of prisoner processing. Unlike the failure of leadership at Abu Ghraib, Major Garrity stepped forward and threatened to report abuses to the International Red Cross when she saw them. As a result, the abuses of Abu Ghraib were avoided. The prisoners, even while they were treated as prisoners, recognized that their basic human rights were respected. When released, they became promoters of peace in the community and additionally turned over valuable information to their U.S. captors. Unfortunately, we are not taught to believe in the basic goodness of the human spirit nor the effectiveness of doing the right thing.

We recently learned that prisoner abuse was authorized from the very top of the chain of command. The example of Major Garrity however needs to be told so that we can learn by example how to act morally when confronted with a difficult decision.

There is an underlying assumption, imbedded in our nation's fabric, that the

desired outcome can only be brought about by force and coercion. If it is difficult to find somebody who is against torture, it is even more difficult to find someone who believes that there is a greater likelihood of success, *i.e.*, the avoidance of sneak attacks, the discovery of secret information, etc., by respecting human rights as opposed to by a denial of human rights as opposed to coercion and force. The comment is made that torture is an esoteric issue, too challenging and dense for the general public. Fortunately, support has unexpectedly been provided by our intelligence agencies who have concluded that our prisoner abuse activities in Iraq and Guantanamo increase rather than diminish terrorism.

We will win the war in Iraq when we, starting from the very highest leadership, show respect to the people of Iraq including our enemies. When our moral institutions starting with the media, religion and academia are willing to step forward and take a moral stand, then we will see our leaders affirm that the only moral stand is to forbid the abusive and degrading treatment of prisoners. A few individuals have also stood up, primarily retired military personnel including General Colin Powell and a number of other generals.

Aside from “liberal” news outlets, however, there is a marked absence, however, of comment from any traditional moral sources. Morals, as we are often told, must be based upon immutable principles. The Rule of Law finds its basic principles in basic human dignity, the right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment, the right to due process. Unfortunately, those who speak loudest about the existence of immutable principles are the last to make a moral stand.

Kenneth G. Petrulis

kenneth.petrulis@verizon.net

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