

Military aggression, war profiteering, crony payoffs are publicly celebrated as national virtues

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Dirty Glass

One of the most remarkable things about the Bush Regime is how open it is in its villainy. The most shameful acts — military aggression, war profiteering, crony payoffs — are publicly celebrated as national virtues. So it was no surprise to hear the Bushist Party's bold declaration last week that the torture of innocent people should become the law of the land.

At the bidding of the White House, the Bushist Party's chief congressional honcho, House Speaker Dennis Hastert, slipped a measure into the massive intelligence reform bill that gives the president the power to deliver any foreigner he chooses into the hands of torturers in some of the most bestial regimes on earth, the Washington Post reports. What is more, the Bushist "law" forbids any judicial review whatsoever of these "extraordinary renditions" of immigrants and visitors who have neither been tried nor convicted of any crime — i.e. those who, according to the old American way, retain the presumption of innocence. Their fate is left solely in the hands of the Leader, or his appointed Homeland Security minion.

In yet another turn of the screw, the new "law" requires that the captives themselves — battered, shackled, often jailed without charges, denied legal counsel, held incommunicado — must somehow provide "clear and convincing proof" that they will be tortured if Bush sends them to the bloodstained dungeons of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, Iraq, or other way stations in Washington's global gulag. If a prisoner fails to meet this impossible condition, then the protections of international treaties against deportation to torture states — sworn pacts signed by the United States — no longer apply. The "law" is also retroactive, covering the Bushist rump from lawsuits — and criminal charges — arising from past renditions.

What's more, the new "law" says that prisoners can be sent anywhere, not simply returned to their native land. This gives the measure its necessary element of blanket terror: Its reach is not confined to denizens of "rogue states" or Bush's brutal allies. Any troublesome alien can be snatched and subjected to outsourced torture, even if his own nation eschews such practices. And lest we forget, Bush's chief "law" officer, Attorney General John Ashcroft, has been relentlessly pushing for the arbitrary power to strip native-born Americans of their citizenship — leaving home-grown "terrorist suspects" open to rendition, indefinite detention and other sinister fates now reserved for those cast out of Bushist Eden. And as always, the definition of a "terrorist suspect" is left to the broad discretion of the security organs.

Hastert's mouthpiece told the Post that the Bush administration "really wants and supports"

the measure. But this week, stung by the newspaper's outing of the provision, the White House began — what's the word? — flip-flopping like a duck on fire. Bush's top legal beagle, Alberto Gonzales suddenly declared that the administration actually opposed the measure which they had "really wanted and supported" just the day before. Why, good gracious alive, said the beagle, everybody knows the White House is firmly opposed to torture!

This would be the same White House whose legal kennel has produced a torrent of weasel-worded papers "justifying" some of the most exquisite tortures imaginable. As was widely reported by the Wall Street Journal, The Economist and others earlier this year, the White House and Pentagon legal teams devised very specific guidelines to help their gulag goons "prepare the ground for interrogations." The Bush Rules stated that you could beat a captive to within an inch of his life — as long as you did no "lasting damage." Indeed, you could even beat him to death — as long as you didn't intend to kill him when you started the torture session.

These are the actual "legal" opinions of Bush's top lawdogs. This is Bush's — and Gonzales' — actual attitude toward torture. In fact, it was Gonzales himself who told Bush that international laws against torture "do not apply" in the "war on terror," the Journal reported. He urged Bush to disavow the Geneva Conventions during his vast, amorphous crusade against "terrorism," in order to avoid "future prosecution" for war crimes, should the Regime's prison atrocities ever come to light.

Gonzales' disavowal of the Hastert measure was the usual pack of lies, a shuck for the rubes. He told the Post that the Bush Regime doesn't "expel ... or extradite individuals" to countries where they are likely to be tortured. He knows this is false. Bush's renditions of untried, uncharged detainees to torture states have been thoroughly documented for years, in the press, by human rights groups and congressional investigators — indeed, by the open braggadocio of the Bush Regime itself. "We don't kick the [expletive] out of them," one swaggering CIA official told the Post in 2002; "we send them to other countries so they can kick the [expletive] out of them."

Despite the public flip-flop, the Bush-Hastert torture measure is still very much alive in the congressional sausage-factory. But whatever its eventual fate, it has already served its larger purpose. Bush was hoisted into office by a corrupt elite openly committed to imposing "full-spectrum dominance" over world affairs, by any means necessary — including decades of "pre-emptive" war. Such a thoroughgoing program requires the coarsening of an entire society, the creation of a more war-like people willing to countenance state terrorism on a massive, sustained scale. "This is who we are now," the rendition bill, like the Iraq War, says about the United States; "this is what we stand for: torture, murder, aggression, brute force."

This is the mirror Bush is holding up to Americans. Will they smash it — or embrace it? We'll know the answer in November.

Chris Floyd's book, "Empire Burlesque," is available at www.globaleyefloyd.com .

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