

The Imperial Personality

Abu Ghraib was not just a privates' party.

By Justin Raimondo

"I'M NOT GOING to go down alone for this." So said Col. Thomas Pappas, commander of the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade, when one of the detainees at Abu Ghraib prison died while being interrogated. The implicit threat—that if put on trial for staging the Abu Ghraib horror show he'd point to the real authors and directors in the Pentagon and perhaps higher—is very real.

So far, only seven lowly reservists face court-martial proceedings. The report of Gen. Antonio Teguba, however, named Pappas and three others as "either directly or indirectly responsible for the abuses at Abu Ghraib." But the actions of military intelligence officers such as Pappas are subject to a separate and ongoing investigation, which has been delayed by the replacement of Maj. Gen. George Fay with a more senior general as chief investigator. Lt. Gen. Anthony R. Jones, deputy commander of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, is taking over from here on out, much to the chagrin of Sen. John Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, who protests that this will impede the congressional investigation. "Congress must be given the tools, the reports with which to do its proper oversight," said the Virginia Republican at a recent Senate hearing, at which he practically demanded of Paul Wolfowitz that the Pentagon provide his committee with an interim report.

The Wolf grinned and said he'd get back to him.

But bits and pieces of the story are coming out anyway as legal proceedings against the accused get underway. At the trial of Sabrina Harman, a 26-year-old Army Reservist, Capt. Donald Reese, commander of the 327th Military Police Company, testified that Col. Pappas personally ordered harsh tactics in "softening up" detainees for interrogation.

A photo of Harman, grinning obscenely next to a dead body, is one of many published around the world. She is charged with an indecent act, assault, and desecration of a corpse.

According to Reese's testimony, Pappas and his fellow officers, including CIA, were determined to cover up the death and hatched a plan to get the body out of Abu Ghraib and ditch it "in Baghdad somewhere." The top intelligence officer at the prison, Lt. Col. Steven L. Jordan, gave the order to "get some ice out of the chow hall," and the deed was done.

Jordan isn't going down alone, either. According to *USA Today*, he testified that he was being pressured by the White House, the Pentagon, and the CIA to "pull the intelligence out of" the prisoners. So concerned was the White House about the Abu Ghraib interrogations that the prison merited a visit from an aide to National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. As the casualty rate in Iraq skyrocketed, the administration was increasingly focused on getting better intelligence on the resistance, and Jordan says he was reminded "many, many, many times" of the need to crack the detainees.

Rice aide Fran Townsend denies all: she says she spent a total of two hours at Abu Ghraib last November, when many of the known abuses were taking place, but saw or heard nothing unusual. She also denies ever discussing interrogation methods with Jordan and characterizes his testimony as "ridiculous." Her sole purpose in journeying to Abu Ghraib, she claims, was to "learn" about the insurgency and to make sure information gleaned from detainees was properly shared among the various intelligence agencies.

But, according to Jordan, Townsend was just the go-between, an emissary from on high: he testified that Pappas, his immediate supervisor at the prison, said on at least two occasions "that some of the [intelligence] reporting was getting read by Rumsfeld, folks out at Langley, some very senior folks." According to Jordan, Pappas dated the intense push for actionable intelligence from "the very beginning," well before the interrogations descended into an orgy of sadistic perversion in the fall of 2003. Jordan also testified that Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, then the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, was a major source of the pressure: "I know Gen. Sanchez was in our knickers to get more information from detainees."

Jordan's testimony immediately threw the investigation by the military authorities into a quandary: the two-star General Fay couldn't investigate Sanchez, who wears three. General Jones has had his three stars a bit longer than Sanchez, but

the switch will postpone the investigation and delay any possible charges brought against military intelligence officers and the interrogators under their command, while the reservists take the heat.

What can't be postponed or controlled is the release of additional photographs and videos out of Abu Ghraib. We have only had a glimpse of a very limited selection: dogs unleashed on naked prisoners; sexual humiliation; the hooded man standing on a box, arms outstretched crucifixion-style. But according to Seymour Hersh, without whom the Abu Ghraib outrages would never have come to light, these indelible images of evil, as bad as they are, pale before what is coming.

Blogger Brad Delong shares this account of a talk Hersh gave recently at the University of Chicago: "He said that after he broke Abu Ghraib people are coming out of the woodwork to tell him this stuff. He said he had seen all the Abu Ghraib pictures. He said, 'You haven't begun to see evil ...' then trailed off. He said, 'horrible things done to children of women prisoners, as the cameras run.' He looked frightened ..."

The source of that evil emanates, not only from the torture chambers of Abu Ghraib, but from what Professor Claes Ryn calls the "Jacobin" spirit that animates the War Party. His insight into the psychology of the neoconservatives' "will to dominate" by imposing global democracy at gunpoint is all too applicable here:

But 9/11 changed everything, the neo-Jacobins cry. Well, not quite everything. The human condition has not changed. Terrible events do not cancel the need for those personal qualities and social and political structures without which the will to power becomes arbitrary and tyrannical. Unfortunately, 9/11 gave the imperialistic personality another pretext for throwing off restraint.

The imperialistic personality—reflexively aggressive, unbearably conceited, extravagantly self-deluded—is really a form of mental illness. It is clearly visible in Sabrina Harman's manic glee as she posed next to a mutilated corpse, in the demented delight Charles Graner obviously took in his "work" as he piled naked detainees in a human pyramid, in the manic malevolence of Lynndie England's on-camera antics. We are told the madness was confined to the rank-and-file, but the evidence, as it comes out in the testimony Jordan, Reese, and others, indicates otherwise.

As more horrors are unveiled, and the testimony of participants points to the implicit consent of higher-ups, it is no exaggeration to speak of a neo-Jacobin reign of terror in Iraq. Just as the original Jacobins dragged their victims to the

While "Copper Green" may have handed Rumsfeld a victory in Washington's bureaucratic turf wars, there's been some blowback on the Iraqi battlefield: *Time* magazine reports that no sooner had many inmates been released from Abu Ghraib prison than they joined up with anti-U.S. rebels. A former officer with Saddam's intelligence service told *Time* that the jail had been turned into a *madrasa*, or Islamic religious school. "We studied hard every day and often into the night," he said. "There was one man who didn't even know how to pray. When he got out he was like an imam, and is one of our most ferocious fighters on the front line."

"Copper Green" was meant to crush the insurgency but instead fueled it. Rumsfeld's secret army of torturers, instead of routing the rebels, turned Abu

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guillotine while proclaiming their fealty to universal principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality, so their present-day heirs attach a leash to their victims' necks and call it "liberation."

While the administration frantically spun Abu Ghraib as an "isolated" incident, Hersh dropped another bombshell in the *New Yorker*: Rumsfeld had approved a "special access" program known as "Copper Green," a secret army "which had been focussed on the hunt for Al Qaeda" and was "expanded to the interrogation of prisoners in Iraq." Hersh cites "several" American intelligence officials, past and present, as confirming that "Copper Green" utilized "physical coercion and sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners" as a strategy to stem the rising tide of the insurgency—and to fulfill "Rumsfeld's long-standing desire to wrest control of America's clandestine and paramilitary operations from the CIA."

Ghraib into a recruiting center for them. A more graphic illustration of the unintended consequences of interventionism would be hard to imagine.

Another potentially devastating aspect of the burgeoning scandal is the involvement of Israel. The Israeli signature—hooded prisoners, psycho-sexual humiliation, and soft torture—was in evidence since the first photos were released. But now the proof is in: Gen. Janis Karpinski, former commander of Abu Ghraib, recently told the BBC that when she met an Israeli interrogator at a prison facility in Iraq, she said, "Wow, that's kind of unusual." "No, not really," was his reply. Are professional sadists from Israel tutoring American greenhorns? This is a gift to al-Qaeda.

More Americans will die in Iraq as a result of Abu Ghraib and "Copper Green," but the blowback on the domestic front is damaging in another sense. A 50-page memo written by Assistant Attorney

General Jay S. Bybee redefines torture so narrowly as to exclude practically anything that does not inflict lasting physical damage. According to what will surely go down in history as the Ashcroft-Bybee theory of legalized sadism, torture “must be equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death.” Does pulling out fingernails constitute a “serious physical injury”? After all, fingernails grow back. And surely rape hardly ever leads to organ failure or death. Mock executions, dosing with psychosis-producing chemicals, and sleep deprivation are all permissible under the Ashcroft-Bybee rules.

Ashcroft’s minions further opined that the government had “sweeping” powers to act as it sees fit because “national security decisions require the unity in purpose and energy in action” and these are the exclusive domain of “the presidency rather than Congress.”

Unity in Purpose, Energy in Action—a slogan that perfectly expresses the military leader-cult encouraged by our condition of perpetual warfare. It has a totalitarian ring to it that seems vaguely foreign, as if it might have been a phrase coined by Mussolini or some obscure Fascist ideologue. Certainly it is offered in the same spirit.

According to Bybee’s neo-royalist interpretation of the Constitution, the president, rather than being the chief executive of a republic, is a monarch in all but name. Endowed with absolute power, above the laws of God and man, the president, in this new framework, is the living incarnation of the imperialistic personality: a god, or a demon, but surely, in either case, not of mortal men. ■

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Moon Shadow

The neocons flee their quirky patron to feed off a richer host.

By Paul Gottfried

DURING THE LAST WEEK in June, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Slate*, and Fox News all ran stories about how the head of the Unification Church and the angel of the Washington Times Corporation, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, had crowned himself in front of the Dirksen Senate Office Building as a universal messiah. Making this event particularly newsworthy was the presence of what Fox News called a “bipartisan crowd of senators and congressmen.” A now embarrassed member of this crowd, Rep. Roscoe Bartlett of Maryland, participated in the ceremony by carrying the reverend’s robes onto the dais.

I was not surprised by what took place or the vicious glee with which the media jumped on the story. In the late eighties I had been the senior editor of the now closed-down monthly *The World and I*, a publication funded by the reverend and staffed largely by church members. Moon and his lieutenants incurred enormous deficits putting out this magazine, which until the late nineties ran to 700 glossy pages each month. Despite the paltry monthly sales, which rarely exceeded 10,000, the magazine paid as much as \$1,000 per article. The justification for this investment was that the Reverend Moon, who I immediately learned was considered a divine personage, had recognized the “spiritual need” for a publication of this size. Mr. Joo, an amiable Korean gentleman,

oversaw our magazine until he became the titular head of our parent organization, the Washington Times Corporation. And unlike his mostly ceremonial participation in the corporation, Joo took a direct role in making sure that our contents “reflected the Founder’s mission.” He went over the copy with a fine-toothed comb and pulled items that he thought would unsettle his mentor.

From my impressions, a striking disconnect existed between the world in which the Korean church elite and their multinational following were immersed and the neoconservative journalists who predominated at *Insight* and the *Washington Times*. While the latter were busy networking with “Norm,” “Midge,” and “Irving,” and referred to the ungainly John Podhoretz, who worked at the *Times* and later *Insight*, as “Norman’s son,” the Unificationists were absorbed in theology. Whether trying to puzzle out in translation the Korean utterances of the Founder, explaining to outsiders that according to the Unificationist tract “The Divine Principle” John the Baptist had betrayed Jesus to the Roman authorities, or speculating on when the Millennium would commence in Korea, church members did not place a high priority on current events. My subordinates expressed views that seemed patterned on what the neoconservatives down the road at the *Washington Times* were saying. The two reasons they gave for being opposed to the communists, a