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Veterans For Peace: www.veteransforpeace.org

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VETERANS' GROUP WARNS SENATORS TO VOTE NO ON MUKASEY NOMINATION Says refusal to nix torture and abuse puts all GIs at risk

The confirmation of Michael Mukasey as U.S. Attorney General will place U.S. service members and all citizens working and visiting overseas in unnecessary danger. Because Mukasey will not repudiate obvious torture techniques, he does not have the credibility to oversee investigations to stop abuse of Iraqis by contractors, nor the confidence of the American people to give President Bush advice that does not compromise the United States' stated commitment to human rights.

In October 2003, VFP filed a Freedom of Information Act request to learn more about detainees held overseas by the United States. VFP also challenged the Bush Administration's effort to skirt the Geneva Convention by creating a new "enemy combatant" designation. Then Executive Director of Veterans For Peace Wilson "Woody" Powell, wrote, "Amongst our members are men who have been prisoners of war. They will tell you that during World War II, the Nazis treated American and British POWs according to the standards set down by the Geneva Convention and international law more generally. However, the Germans used Russian prisoners for slave labor and many died as a result. Why the difference? The US and Great Britain observed the Geneva Convention; the Russians did not."

"As I look back at what Woody wrote four years ago, I find myself both sad and angry that my government still has not lived up to its responsibilities," states Michael McPhearson who replaced the retired Powell as Executive Director in February 2005. "Since that time we have had the Abu Ghraib torture scandal where only low ranking enlisted personnel were punished with prison terms while high ranking officers have been held administratively accountable at best. We know contractors were present and possibly supervised the torture but none have been prosecuted. We have contractors like employees of Blackwater USA, now under investigation for allegedly opening fire on civilians, were promised immunity by State Department investigators, thus making a subsequent criminal charge highly unlikely. Now we have an Attorney General nominee who cannot find it within himself to state that waterboarding is torture and illegal. We continue to have ongoing stories of torture and rendition. These are but a few examples of the Bush administration's disregard for international law. He has pushed aside the U.S. Constitution in the name of national security. The Republican Congress rubber stamped his actions. Now the Democrat led Congress continues to allow these abuses."

Vietnam veteran Elliott Adams, the National President of Veterans For Peace warns, "Our government claims that the U.S. is fighting to protect and preserve freedom, justice, and the rule of law. Yet day after day we see abuses of these ideals and government officials attempting to justify abuses. The U.S. use of torture and lack of accountability for those who abuse and kill Iraqis is superb propaganda for al-Qaeda. Our government's actions and inactions place our soldiers and US citizens in danger. At one time an enemy soldier might have found it worth surrendering to the good Americans. Today they will have second thoughts as they contemplate stories of torture and abuse. Congress has an opportunity to make a statement and change the direction of U.S. actions in Iraq. Do not confirm Judge Michael Mukasey for the Attorney General of the United States and hold full investigations into the conduct of contractors at Abu Ghraib and in the latest incidents."

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Founded in 1985, Veterans For Peace is a national organization of men and women veterans of all eras and duty stations spanning the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, Gulf and current Iraq wars as well as other conflicts cold or hot. It has chapters in nearly every state in the union and is headquartered in St. Louis.

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