

August 19, 2004

Citizens,

At the conclusion of a very informative neighborhood meeting tonight in Bluffdale, I asked Congressman Chris Cannon when the press and Red Cross were going to be allowed into Guantanamo Bay to ensure that the prisoners were being treated humanely. He responded:

"I don't want to get in the way of the military."

Cannon also stated that there are times to do certain things and that now is "not that time". He said that he was in favor of Congressional oversight, but gave no specifics as to what that entailed or how he planned to ever accomplish it. (He also claimed that the Bush administration, via Donald Rumsfeld, has stood in the way of some oversight by blocking some bureaucratic assignment, which I did not understand clearly.)

I countered that we have been holding prisoners there for years now who have yet to be charged with a crime. Even Nazi war criminals were granted the decency of being charged with some sort of crime after WWII.

His aide, Gordon Jones, rebutted that we do not need to charge them with a crime until the war was over. I countered that this "war" is not likely to end (which they did not take exception to), and asked if they were really suggesting that we wait until the prisoners are all dead to see if they are being treated humanely.

Cannon responded that such inspections would not be "wise at this time" (they were making a hasty exit, so I was unsure whether he meant from a security standpoint, a political standpoint, or what). I countered that the Red Cross in particular has been allowed to inspect many prisoner of war camps in past wars and conflicts, including German camps in WWII, and it wasn't the end of the world. If the conditions of the prisoners was truly as humane and controlled as the government proclaimed it to be, there would be no danger to the visitors or to security to observe their condition and treatment.

I also mentioned a news special I recently viewed regarding three prisoners who were recently released from Guantanamo prison and who were deported to England, where they were released, as I recall, within 36 hours. They had signed confessions, they said were under duress. It was later reported that their "confessed" activities were not possible (as I recall, they were not even in the countries mentioned in their confessionals at the time).

For some starter information on former prisoners who claim abuse, see:

<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/040805/325/ezmov.html> (three released prisoners in Britain)

<http://www.truthnews.net/month/2004070125.htm> (article from Radio Free Europe)

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/3051501.stm (another former prisoner who claims abuse, including injections)

Congressman Cannon claimed to not know anything about it. I countered that he now has three examples of alleged abuse and is supposed to provide oversight in his official capacity. He reiterated the same points and left without making any commitment (which is one of his skills).

His aide, Gordon Jones, also let fly that the prisoners essentially belong there, to which I replied that it was real easy for him to say that because he has not been detained there and, being a white American [not to mention an aide to a Congressman], was not likely to be going there anytime soon.

There were other witnesses to this conversation. I find it extremely revealing that Congressman Cannon is reluctant to provide a check and meaningful oversight to the people he controls and employs (the military). It is also interesting that justice in the form of basic due process and humane treatment are not on his priority list "at this time."

If you run into Cannon, particularly in public, please challenge him on this. Do not allow him to fool you with promises of "looking into it" (another trademark response). We need many more citizens demanding action yesterday.

Our government was formed to "establish justice." It is easy to grant due process and humane treatment to people you like -- who support you and give you campaign contributions. The real test of a civil society is to grant it to people you don't like -- who can give you little or nothing in return.

This conversation was so disturbing, I felt it needed to be shared. I think we all wonder how things have gotten so out of hand -- why the denial of basic human dignity and due process have suddenly become tolerable and excusable in our society. I was staring the reasons for our decline in the face tonight.

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P.S. Stay tuned for Part II of this neighborhood meeting, featuring Cannon and his aides on illegal aliens and abortion.