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"THERE HE IS, BOYS . . . PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE!"

BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

In my opinion

The injustice of U.S. justice

I am a serious fan of the U.S. legal system. Those who stand accused of crime are innocent until proven guilty, citizens have a right to trial by jury and there are rules against cruel and unusual punishment. Of course, in reality, these staples of American justice don't always pan out so well. Genetic evidence indicates that more than a few citizens have been wrongly executed, police brutality and issues such as racial profiling are still present in many areas and access to a legal system that works for you depends more on your annual income than your innocence or guilt. However, the biggest problems plaguing the U.S. justice system right now are two intertwined factors: hypocrisy and patriotism.

Zacarias Moussaoui is a French citizen who was planning to fly a plane into the White House on behalf of none other than Osama bin Laden. After Sept. 11, Moussaoui never got a chance to complete his mission, and he now sits poised to be the only person prosecuted for involvement in the Sept. 11 attacks. If U.S. lawyers get their way, he will pay for that involvement with his life.

Moussaoui has been charged, in essence, with planning to hurt American citizens, and for this our government believes he should die — a probable, acceptable conclusion of our government, until one considers the myriad of U.S. soldiers escaping even the most menial prosecution for their heinous crimes on foreign soil. The Bush administration is once again proving itself to be rampant with hypocrisy. You want harm against humanity, let me give you two words: Abu Ghraib. Is considering harm toward American citizens worse than actually harming an Iraqi life? Apparently so. Whereas U.S. citizens are people to be protected at the utmost cost, foreign citizens are acceptable casualties of war and the rash thinking



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

that accompanies it.

Luckily, Human Rights Watch recommended this week that a special prosecutor be assigned to look into the role of senior defense officials within the Abu Ghraib abuses. Indeed, it seems obvious that any investigation into the questionable actions of subordinates should include an analysis of their superiors. Moussaoui is slated to receive the death penalty, so one can only imagine that the official under whom he was working (i.e. Osama bin Laden) would receive a sentence of at least the same magnitude if apprehended. If the United States is willing to sentence Moussaoui and bin Laden to death for conspiring to harm people, Donald Rumsfeld and then-commander of U.S. troops Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez should at least be investigated for their orders to use "painful stress situations" and myriad other tactics that broke the Geneva Conventions.

Perhaps Rumsfeld and Sanchez were too far up on the chain of command. Perhaps they had no idea their orders would be magnified to induce the horrific abuse at Abu Ghraib. But what about the other commanding officials who were physically present at the scene of the abuse? One, just one of those commanders was given any sort of reprimand. The other superior officers, Sanchez included, were relieved of blame for "mitigating circumstances," such as the fact that "U.S. military command was short of senior

officers." I guess we're left to assume that lower rank officers thought putting prisoners into grossly inappropriate sexual positions with each other was the only way to bring in more army officials. The real mitigating circumstance is the U.S. government's apparent core belief that authorizing harsh treatment of prisoners and breaking international war codes is OK, as long as the welfare of America remains stable.

On the other side of this debate is a somewhat logical argument that the soldiers actually committing the abuse deserve the harshest punishment; after all, they were the human beings physically executing torture. But once again, to charge only these lower-level soldiers is hypocritical of the U.S. government. Rumsfeld, Sanchez and the other exonerated officials may have not personally tortured Iraqis; but, like the conspiring of Moussaoui, American officials' orders and planning still ultimately led to the abuse.

The United States should not operate itself legally under the pretense of patriotism; what benefits America is acceptable, what harms America is not. The ends should not justify the means, especially when those means are just a facade of national security based on homeland affiliation. Our country is in a state where "terrorism" is designated the ultimate evil and anyone working for terrorism is deemed worthy of the harshest treatment. Those working "against terrorism" (such as the officials in charge at Abu Ghraib) are granted extreme leniency because of their job description.

One of America's biggest buzz words is and has always been justice. Unfortunately, as a buzz word and in general, justice is being swiftly replaced by terrorism.

aileeslater@dailyemerald.com

Editorial

Bush should acknowledge party unity on Bolton

Last week, President Bush made an interesting request to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the group in charge of confirming his chosen U.N. ambassador, John Bolton: Bush asked the panel to "put aside politics," indicating his opinion that a rejection of Bolton would simply be a factor of Democrats versus Republicans. However, in the case of Bolton's confirmation, Bush is seriously mistaken. The problems with Bolton as potential ambassador to the United Nations are myriad, and they are being discussed by both Democrats and Republicans alike.

The first strike against Bolton is his widely published statement in which he was quoted as saying there is no such thing as the United Nations. No wonder members of the committee are reluctant to confirm this man; it's a dangerous game to hire someone for the purpose of interacting with an organization that, in the person's mind, may or may not exist. Can our nation expect that Bolton would be experienced or knowledgeable about the inner-workings of the United Nations with respect to his earlier comments on it?

Strike two is the disparity between Bolton's qualifications and the needs of the job he is slated to fill. Issues of peacekeeping and worldwide diplomacy are especially important to the United States at a time when we have already alienated so many countries with cries of "with us or against us." As ambassador to the United Nations, Bolton would be filling a primarily diplomatic job, yet Bolton's personality and work tactics have been described repeatedly as tough-minded and bullying. There is nothing wrong with politicians who stay firm to their beliefs, but in the case of a U.N. diplomat, it seems obvious that a bully is exactly what the United States does not need handling its international relations. Ex-State Department official Carl Ford has even testified that Bolton was abusive toward his junior staff.

Interestingly, Bush made a valid point when asking that party politics not come into play while the panel makes its decision. Unfortunately for Bush, some members of his own party are just as reluctant as Democrats to approve Bolton. The Senate Foreign Relations committee is made up of eight Democrats and 10 Republicans. As of now, at least one Republican had indicated he may side with Democrats and vote against the nomination of Bolton. After hearing witnesses called by committee Democrats, Republican Senator George Voinovich said he didn't "feel comfortable about voting for Mr. Bolton."

If disagreement over President Bush's nomination of John Bolton has crossed party lines, chances are good there is a real issue here, not just another Republican/Democrat squabble. President Bush should recognize this fact. Instead of asking the parties to put aside politics, Bush needs to take a second glance at the surrounding political world and recognize that Bolton is not the best choice for ambassador to the United Nations. It is a diplomatic organization; if the United States hopes to maintain friendly ties with that organization and the countries involved in it, Bush must choose a different nominee.

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