

Pony Blow on "indefinite detention" in the war that never ends

Submitted by lambert on Tue, 06/12/2007 - 3:16pm

From [today's gaggle briefing](#) [1]. Read all the way to the end:

Q But doesn't the indefinite holding of this many prisoners under these circumstances really undercut the President's arguments in favor of democracy worldwide, as he just spoke about in his speech --

MR. SNOW: How does it do that?

Q That's what I'm asking you.

MR. SNOW: No, the question doesn't make sense to me. How does that happen?

Um...

Q By not having due process for every --

MR. SNOW: Are you saying that detaining people who are plucked off the battlefields is an assault on democracy? Are you kidding me? You're talking about the people who were responsible for supporting the Taliban, somehow detaining them is an assault on democracy?

Q And not charging them --

Q Yes. You're getting quite a bit of criticism internationally, as well as domestically on the issue of holding people indefinitely without charge. Are you denying that's the case?

MR. SNOW: No, many have been held, but many also are now being processed through the system. What I just thought was peculiar is that you have people who waged active warfare against democracy and you think detaining them somehow is an assault on democracy.

Q I asked you about the procedures and situation in which they're held --

MR. SNOW: The procedures are those that have -- again, if you take a look at the civil liberty protections in there, they're extensive, and they've been debated before

Congress. If you want to give -- if you want to give a platform to folks who belong to organizations that either are not housed in the United States or feel perfectly free to criticize, without having taken a careful look at the precautions, or, in many cases, for instance, in Guantanamo, refuse to come, refuse the invitation to do a full investigation -- well, fine, you may give them that platform. But the question I would ask is, will you not also, then, when you are evaluating these, number one, figure out who was there; number two, take a look at the history of warfare and how these situations have been handled, you will find great consistency over the years; and number three, take a look at the actual record in terms of how these folks are treated, then get back to us on it.

Q Can I follow on that, Tony? Guantanamo, so far only three people have been charged, and the military commission has thrown out two of those charges.

MR. SNOW: Right.

Q They're on appeal, as you know.

MR. SNOW: Right.

Q Everybody else is an enemy combatant down there, whether he's described ultimately as unlawful, or not. According to the folks down at Guantanamo -- and you said it yourself that this is a question of warfare -- they're being held until the end, presumably, of the war on terror. How on earth do you get to the end of the war on terror and ultimately release these people?

MR. SNOW: Number one, you're assuming that nobody gets released, and as you know, in fact, the number of people being detained at Guantanamo has been slowly going down; more than 100 have been returned. So you have a significant reduction, and we continue to try as best we can to repatriate folks. So don't make the assumption that it is a totally static situation.

Number two, it has been the case, in the role of warfare, that, in fact, you can hold enemy combatants during the course of hostilities. Having said that, we'd be perfectly happy to return all those that we can.

Now, keep in mind, one of the conditions is, when you return them, they have to be returned to a nation that will, in fact, respect their human rights and their civil rights in the disposition of these cases. So that is also one of the conditions, and sometimes those conditions are not met.

Q But can I just follow on that? How do you declare an end to the war on terror?

MR. SNOW: I don't know.

Well, thanks for clarifying that.

UPDATE OK, OK, not "gaggle" but "briefing." Could we just say, oh, loathesome bulging sack of

spin and lies?



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