

Editorial

What's Wrong With a Little Friendly Persuasion?

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I have seen the photos on the news, modestly pixilated to protect us, the television evening news viewer, from that which may offend our tender sensibilities. These pictures depict, the talking heads breathlessly tell us, the atrocities that American soldiers have afflicted on innocent, helpless Iraqi prisoners. In these pictures, the American soldiers are grinning, I can tell that clearly, and they all seem to affect a single common gesture with their thumbs up. The Iraqi prisoners, however, are not so clear. Their bodies and faces are digitally blurred. But they seem to be arranged naked in human piles; or in other suggestive poses allegedly staged to humiliate them.

OK. So what? I didn't see any obvious signs of torture. I didn't see any bodies peeled of skin; I didn't see teeth or fingernails pulled out; none were hanging from chains on a dungeon wall; I saw no electric or other burns, or scars, or wounds, or lacerations; or amputations or other signs of extreme physical trauma. So what's the beef? Just that they're humiliated? They're prisoners of war, and they are in that facility for the purpose of interrogation and punishment. These people are our enemies, and they are dedicated to our destruction and the destruction of the Western way of life. That means they will try to kill me - and you - anytime, anywhere.

I hear the talking heads saying that they were horribly abused - cue the ubiquitous references to Auschwitz and Bataan here - and suffered at the hands of rogue American soldiers and inattentive offices. The weak and wobbly among us wring their hands at the injustice of it all, weeping that we as a nation should apologize to the people of Iraq and to the world, that we are really not like this, really we're not. Just please try to like us because we're sorry.

But the weak and wobbly have short memories. I remember pictures of not too long ago that didn't make the American television evening news. They were too graphic, we were told, to display to we of tender sensibilities. They were pictures of dead American soldiers, ambushed and shot by Iraqis, dragged from where they fell and piled in a heap on a cold concrete floor in an Iraqi warehouse. Images of Iraqi irregulars, with AK-47s in hand, gleefully standing over the freshly killed American bodies made the Al Jazeera

news services, however. Their news coverage showed laughing, jubilant Iraqis as they cheered the death of our soldiers. But, it was rationalized, these were soldiers after all, combatants in a hostile environment, and, well, casualties do happen.

And I remember a more recent photo, one that the TV networks again wouldn't run because of its shocking brutality, but a few print news services did run it. Has America forgotten? It was a picture of four dead American civilians, shot and killed, then burned beyond recognition, and dragged through the streets to Iraqi cheers, and finally hung on a bridge superstructure above cheering throngs. These were civilians, not combatants, over there to build the infrastructure for a civilized country so the just-liberated Iraqis had something to govern when we give them the keys in June. Where were the weak and wobbly to apologize then? Why did I not hear apologies for the rape, sodomy and torture of Jessica Lynch? And let's not forget the terrified passengers in those four jetliners, as they became aware that crazed Islamic radicals were about to kill everyone aboard in a fiery and spectacular suicide crash. Where were the weak and wobbly as thousands of innocents died in the burning collapse of the World Trade Center, and the crash into the Pentagon?

We are now engaged in World War III, and it's a real war - a guerilla war. We no longer fight in the Napoleonic fashion, where lines of our soldiers are here, and the enemy's soldiers are lined up over there. There's no front, no rear. Radical, anti-western Islamic factions are killing people all over the world - in the U.S., Spain, France, and in the Phillippines - and they're utterly ruthless. Now I do not condone torture, but what I've seen so far doesn't rise to the level of torture. Compared to what occurred at that prison under Saddam's reign, these "humiliations" are insignificant. What's wrong with a little friendly persuasion to get information that can save American lives - both military and civilian, stateside and in-country? They started it, after all, and if a prisoner dies, well, it's war, and there's bound to be a few casualties.

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