

The following text may be printed, copy/pasted, or downloaded and emailed.

## **Bipartisan group wants independent abuse inquiry**

A bipartisan group of current and former politicians and government officials in Washington will urge Congress to establish an outside investigation into detainee abuse allegations.

CAROL ROSENBERG  
Miami Herald  
May 25, 2005

Some Washington Democrats and Republicans are joining the chorus for an independent commission to examine allegations that war-on-terror prisoners have been abused in U.S. custody.

The Georgetown University-based Constitution Project has called a news conference today with former Republican Rep. Bob Barr of Georgia, retired senior diplomat Thomas Pickering and former Clinton White House chief of staff John Podesta to promote the plan.

Advocates want "an independent, bipartisan commission to fully investigate the issue of abuse of terrorist suspects," said John Whitehead, an organizer and president of the Rutherford Institute, a civil liberties group.

A commission, he said, would "send a message to the rest of the world . . . the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings, whether they are U.S. citizens or prisoners of war." The organization is staging the event on the same day Amnesty International releases its annual report, which also is expected to tackle the treatment of U.S.-held captives around the world.

The notion of an outside investigation is not new. A year ago, amid revelations of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, Amnesty and Human Rights Watch urged an independent investigation -- an idea the Pentagon dismissed as unnecessary, because it had a series of internal probes of its own.

Since then, the office of the Justice Department's inspector general, Glenn Fine, also launched a peripheral probe -- looking into FBI e-mails that described detainee abuse at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where terror suspects are being held. Meanwhile, two weeks ago, Michigan Rep. John Conyers, a Democrat, and 49 other congressional members wrote Attorney General Alberto Gonzales seeking a special counsel to investigate allegations of prisoner abuse. Gonzales has not replied.

The Constitution Project's effort is "aimed more at Congress than the president," said Pedro Ribeiro, spokesman for the group.