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## **U.S. Should Reject Torture**

Bush wrong to fight McCain language on treatment of enemy detainees

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A clear congressional statement that the United States will not subject detainees in the war on terror to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment shouldn't be at all controversial. Apparently it is, though, for President George W. Bush, who has wrongly insisted that he alone has authority to control such prisoners' fates.

Bush has argued that the courts have no role in the war-on-terror detentions. Now he's battling to keep Congress on the sidelines as well. The Supreme Court rejected his power grab, ruling that detainees have a right to contest their designation as enemy combatants. Now Congress should step up too.

The battle line was clearly drawn on Capitol Hill last week. The White House threatened to veto a \$496-billion defense spending bill rather than accept amendments offered by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) that would expressly prohibit cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment and make the Army Field Manual's rules for interrogations the standard for questioning all detainees in U.S. custody. McCain would also outlaw "ghost detainees" by requiring that every foreign national in U.S. custody be registered with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

An amendment offered by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), would define "enemy combatant." And it would write into law the procedures that the administration already has in place to prosecute detainees at Guantanamo. It has been met with the same White House resistance.

Graham said his intention was to strengthen the legal hand of the administration, which has won some court fights but lost some as well. McCain said he wanted a clear, consistent standard that U.S. men and women in uniform can understand and that the rest of the world can respect. A former prisoner of war himself, McCain said, "This isn't about who they are. This is about who we are."

Neither argument swayed Bush, so Congress should force the issue. The White House is not in this war alone. Torture is not condoned in U.S. policy, but given the abuse documented at the U.S. prison at Abu Ghraib and allegations of abuse at Guantanamo, an unambiguous legal standard is needed.

Torture doesn't work. It induces prisoners to say anything their interrogators want to hear. It's an abdication of the moral high ground, puts our own fighting people at risk and is plain un-American. Congress needs to make sure it's off limits.