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## **U.S. and the U.N. Human Rights Council; It's not Perfect, but not Worth Disdain**

Editorial  
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The disappointing U.S. decision to not seek a seat on the new United Nations Human Rights Council may speak to the loss of prestige this country has suffered due to its terror-war policies on prisoner treatment. But the decision was what you might expect of a nation that has increasingly shown its disdain for international organizations.

In the end, President Bush heeded the advice of U.N. critics such as Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R., Tenn.) and Rep. Chris Smith (R., N.J.), who said the council would commit the same sins as its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights. The old body's rules allowed some of the worst human rights abusers - Sudan and Libya, for example - to become members.

Other prominent Republicans - including Rep. Henry J. Hyde of Illinois, Sen. Richard G. Lugar of Indiana and even Sen. Norm Coleman of Minnesota, an often-fierce critic of the U.N. - urged the administration to help shape the new council's policies from within. But to no avail.

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton announced last week that this country did not want to be a member of the new council, but would support it financially and otherwise.

Some diplomatic observers suggested the United States was worried that, after reports of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, it might not get the votes needed to be elected to the council. But, really, the decision to not stand for election was predictable, given the earlier U.S. vote against creation of the council.

That vote was indicative of the tenuous relationship the Bush administration has had with the U.N. under Bolton's guidance. Only Israel, Palau and the Marshall Islands also voted no, while 170 nations voted to create the council. Bolton should have felt at least a sliver of contentment when the U.N. agreed in March to disband the old commission, but he never showed it.

The new council is not perfect. Compromises had to be made during difficult negotiations. The result was a standard for electing members that is better than the old commission's, but still not the best. A country needs an absolute majority of votes from the U.N.'s 191 members to be elected to the council. A two-thirds vote standard would have made it even more difficult for rogue nations to get on the new human rights panel.

But the election standards shouldn't have been enough to prevent the Bush administration from wanting to be aboard when the council begins meeting this year.

The U.S. decision to not seek election to the Human Rights Council exemplifies the way Bush has shunned international organizations and ignored treaties since he has been in office. It's too bad this president devalues the importance to national security of partnerships forged with foreign governments through international accords.