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## **The Senator's Assessment of Guantanamo . . .**

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The analogy that Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.) drew regarding the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, was not entirely spurious [news story, June 17]. The FBI memo from which he read said that a prisoner at Guantanamo was "subjected to extreme heat and bitter cold among other unpleasantness."

One of the "scientific" experiments performed by Josef Mengele, the World War II-era "Angel of Death," on captive Jews was to subject them to extremes of heat and cold. I wonder if the modern victims of this form of Mengelian torture would describe what they endured as "unpleasant."

*KATHLEEN DORAN*  
*Falls Church*

In his June 22 Style story, Mark Leibovich discussed the attacks on Sen. Richard J. Durbin for his comparison of torture experienced by some detainees in the war on terrorism to that experienced under the Nazis or Pol Pot. Mr. Leibovich wrote, "There is a dictum in Internet culture called Godwin's Law (after Mike Godwin, a lawyer who coined the maxim), which posits that the longer an online discussion persists, the more likely it is that someone will compare something to the Nazis or Hitler."

He continued, "According to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, 'There is a tradition in many Usenet newsgroups that once such a comparison is made, the thread is over, and whoever mentioned the Nazis has automatically lost whatever argument was in progress.' "

Does it matter to those being held and tortured whether they are at Gestapo headquarters in Nazi Germany or in a cellblock at Abu Ghraib, Iraq? Isn't the pain and the terror the same? Why does one "lose the argument" if one points this out?

*EVELYN CHORUSH*  
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The apology by Sen. Richard J. Durbin to anyone who felt that his remarks concerning the treatment of detainees crossed the line missed the point [news story, June 22].

Members of al Qaeda and their allies being held at Guantanamo belong to a hyper-violent movement dedicated to the destruction of the United States and its allies. Anything said with the short-term goal of political gain that has the long-term effect of helping this sort of enemy represents a stunning lack of judgment.

The thought of any person in chains or subjected to physically uncomfortable situations rightly makes many people uneasy. But even if the worst allegations of abuse that Mr. Durbin listed are true, they do not begin to approach the horror to which the likes of Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Pol Pot subjected innocent people.

The floor that Mr. Durbin stood on to deliver both his original comments and his apology was most likely the target of Flight 93 on Sept. 11, 2001. Since then the majority of al Qaeda's leaders and thousands of its followers have been killed or captured. Brutal regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq have been removed from power and the people of those countries given their first taste of democracy.

These events were not caused by grandstanding politicians but by the hard work, blood and sacrifices of the intelligence communities and armed forces of the United States and its allies. Mr. Durbin's comments make their job harder.

The senator apologized only under mounting pressure from both Republicans and Democrats.

His apology should have been based on his having been reckless and wrong.

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