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## Only the Jailers are safe



New York Times Editorial

Ever since the world learned of the lawless state of American military prisons in Iraq, the administration has hidden behind the claim that only a few bad apples were brutalizing prisoners. President Bush also has dodged the full force of public outrage because the victims were foreigners, mostly Muslims, captured in what he has painted as a war against Islamic terrorists bent on destroying America.


This week, The Times published two articles that reminded us again that the American military prisons are profoundly and systemically broken and that no one is safe from the summary judgment and harsh treatment institutionalized by the White House and the Pentagon after 9/11.

On Monday, Michael Moss wrote about a U.S. contractor who was swept up in a military raid and dumped into a system where everyone is presumed guilty and denied any chance to prove otherwise.

Donald Vance, a 29-year-old Navy veteran from Chicago, was a whistle-blower who prompted the raid by tipping off the F.B.I. to suspicious activity at the company where he worked, including possible weapons trafficking. He was arrested and held for 97 days — shackled and blindfolded, prevented from sleeping by blaring music and round-the-clock lights. In other words, he was subjected to the same mistreatment that thousands of non-Americans have been subjected to since the 2003 invasion.

Even after the military learned who Mr. Vance was, they continued to hold him in these abusive conditions for weeks more. He was not allowed to defend himself at the Potemkin hearing held to justify his detention. And that was special treatment. As an American citizen, he was at least allowed to attend his hearing. An Iraqi, or an Afghani, or any other foreigner, would have been barred from the room.

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Posted by [Stewart Rhodes](#) at 9:04 AM 

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