

---

# National News

---

## Specter, Leahy Seek To Restore Habeas Corpus

Senators Arlen Specter (R-Ill.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) on Dec. 5 introduced “a bill to restore *habeas corpus* for those detained by the United States”—a challenge to one of Vice President Dick Cheney’s recent diktats. Specter, the outgoing chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Leahy, the in-coming chairman, introduced the “Habeas Corpus Restoration Act of 2006.” Specter said in his statement introducing the bill, that he anticipated that the provisions of the war crimes tribunal legislation which eliminated *habeas corpus* for Guantanamo detainees and others will be ruled unconstitutional, noting that the Constitution is very explicit, that *habeas corpus* may only be suspended in time of rebellion or invasion, and that neither of those conditions exist in the United States today.

Leahy announced in his remarks, that he is also co-sponsoring with Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), the “Effective Terrorists Prosecution Act of 2006,” which also re-establishes *habeas corpus*, in addition to correcting other disturbing provisions of the “Military Commissions Act.”

---

## Jewish Weekly Cheers Bolton’s Departure

The weekly Jewish *Forward* welcomed the departure of John Bolton as UN Ambassador, in its “Dear John” editorial on Dec. 8, saying that he had been “a daily reminder of the Bush administration’s arrogant, willful style of governance, of its contempt for the meaning of democracy and the separation of powers. . . . [H]is stubborn flaunting of American exceptionalism, has been a perfect metaphor for this administration’s ideological high-handedness in coping with the problems of the nation and the world.”

The editorial goes after the leadership of the major U.S. Jewish organizations for their

“noisy, tin-eared outpouring of sycophantic unanimity” in lamenting Bolton’s departure, because he was such a friend of Israel. As *Forward* points out, Bolton and the Administration have ensured the alienation of both Israel and the United States from the world community. Ironically, these Jewish advocacy organizations are defending Bush policy, although an overwhelming majority of Jews just voted against the Bush record, the weekly states.

Naming the the Bolton praisers as the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the World Jewish Congress, Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), the Orthodox Union, and B’nai Brith International, the *Forward* concludes, “If they can’t understand their job, it’s time that somebody else stepped forward.”

---

## Administration: Dismiss Lawsuit vs. Rumsfeld

At a hearing on Dec. 8 in Federal court in Washington, D.C., lawyers for the U.S. government, Donald Rumsfeld, and other officials sought to have the court throw out the lawsuit filed last year by nine innocent civilians who were imprisoned and tortured by the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2003-04.

The abuses described in the complaint include severe beatings, cutting with knives, mock executions, death threats to the prisoners and their families, sexual abuse and humiliation, use of dogs to threaten and intimidate, restraint and confinement in excruciatingly painful positions, and severe sensory deprivation.

Lawyers for the defendants argued that to permit such a lawsuit would interfere with the President’s conduct of military operations. They also cited as precedent, two cases charging Henry Kissinger with responsibility for torture of Chileans after the 1973 Pinochet coup, which were dismissed. However, the lawyers for the plaintiffs argued that there is extensive evidence of Rumsfeld’s direct, personal involvement in the abuse

and torture of these prisoners, and there is exhaustive evidence that Rumsfeld personally set the policies which resulted in torture, and personally approved many of the methods used.

Lawyers for the former prisoners pointed to an *amicus* brief filed by retired military officers, which refutes the contention that the lawsuit would improperly intrude into areas of national security and military decision-making. In fact, they argue, enforcement of the absolute ban against torture is necessary to uphold U.S. military tradition and military discipline.

At the end of the hearing, Judge Thomas Hogan stated that it is “unfortunate” that there would even be an argument about torture by the U.S. military. But, he added, there is a substantial difficulty in recognizing the claim of non-U.S. citizens detained in other countries, that they have a right under the U.S. Constitution to bring an action in U.S. courts. Hogan said he will issue a ruling as soon as possible.

---

## McGovern Blames GOP For Spending Cuts

In a conference call on Dec. 7, Rep. James McGovern (D-Mass.), stated that the outgoing Republican Congress is leaving the way it came in, in an irresponsible manner, by not acting on 11 out of 13 spending bills that represent budget cuts. The continuing resolution that is supposed to be passed will have \$7 billion less than Fiscal Year, 2006. He attacked the Republican Congress for cutting veterans’ programs and housing assistance and medical assistance to low-income families during this Christmas season, adding that the most shocking was the cuts to the low-income energy-assistance program.

Asked whether the Democrats would reverse the cuts in the new Congress, he replied that the damage is already being done. The aid should have been passed before October, before the cold weather hit, and the agency that provides the aid should have already had the funds—but that didn’t happen.