



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on March 23, 2009

## Most Guantanamo Detainees Innocent?

The retired Army colonel and Vietnam War veteran described the Bush administration's battlefield detention policy as a "mosaic" strategy, and can be summed up as: arrest everybody and interrogate everybody. The idea was to get battlefield intelligence (something sorely lacking in both conflicts) quickly by interrogating locals. But the Bush administration never sorted the innocent from the guilty. Wilkerson described it as an



ad hoc intelligence philosophy that was developed to justify keeping many of these people, called the mosaic philosophy. Simply stated, this philosophy held that *it did not matter if a detainee were innocent*. Indeed, because he lived in Afghanistan and was captured on or near the battle area, he must know something of importance (this general philosophy, in an even cruder form, prevailed in Iraq as well, helping to produce the nightmare at Abu Ghraib)... *The detainees' innocence was inconsequential. After all, they were ignorant peasants for the most part and mostly Muslim to boot.* [Emphasis added.]

As a result of what could be called a "detain everyone" strategy, many innocents were detained and interrogated, often tortured, and subsequently shipped to Guantanamo. Wilkerson's assertions differ starkly with the [Bush administration line](#) that Guantanamo detainees were the "worst of the worst."

Indeed, the true "worst of the worst" were instead shipped to Bagram Air Force base's "[Salt Pit](#)" prison. That's where the high-value detainees were shipped, according to most credible accounts (see [here](#) and [here](#) for examples).

Wilkerson's blog entry is reinforced by the commendable and extensive private sector research by Seton Hall Law School Professor Mark Denbeaux. But Wilkerson's blog entry raises several questions. First, why did it take so long for Wilkerson to come out with this rather important truth? His blog entry is akin to discovering that a house has a gas leak, and then waiting to warn everyone until after the house has burned to the ground.

Why wait until the Bush administration is out of power to let this important fact out? Presumably, early release of this information would have put a stop to it sooner. He wouldn't even have needed to expose



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any classified information in order to do so. A simple public statement that most of the detainees were innocent by such a prominent official would likely be all that it would have taken for a congressional investigation. Why wait until other researchers, researchers who didn't have privileged access to classified government intelligence, had already proven the case? In [past interviews](#) Wilkerson criticized the White House, and specifically Vice President Cheney, but never mentioned the fact that most of those detained at Guantanamo were innocent.

Wilkerson spoke on the left-wing [Rachel Maddow show March 19](#) and said, "We knew at the State Department so I find it extremely difficult to believe that the people who are in charge — although I have said they are incompetent, I don't think their incompetence reached the degree that they didn't [know] what we knew in terms of what was happening at Guantanamo. "

But if he "knew," why did it take him so many years after resigning his State Department position to say it?

This is the difference between Washington career bureaucrats and American soldiers who were called upon to commit some of these atrocities and exposed them.

The real heroes in this whole sordid national affair were the unbending men who stood up immediately, like Sgt. Samuel Provance, who exposed the Abu Ghraib scandal in real time. Other examples abound, such as Guantanamo guards [Spc. Brandon Neely](#), [Spc. Christopher Arendt](#), and Sgt. James Gilligan, who didn't wait for a change of administrations until they exposed wrongdoing.

These soldiers were mostly persecuted for their whistle-blowing, often being investigated and drummed out of the military. Wilkerson's comments come just at the time when the current Obama administration is happy to reveal some of the misdeeds of the Bush administration for political advantage.

Wilkerson's comments are welcome, nevertheless, even at this late hour. And his words should shame those cowards who still try to withhold the truth from the American public.

After all, the torturing of innocents was done in *our* name (and is [likely still happening](#)). As American citizens, we have a right to know the whole truth, no matter how much it disgraces the nation.

The nation has already been disgraced, and further exposure of information won't sully the nation any more than it's already been sullied. However, only when we know the full truth can we set about the task of restoring our national honor and ensuring it doesn't happen again.

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