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Attachments:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Obama agrees with The American Legion for suppression of detainee photos

WASHINGTON (May 13, 2009) -- In the wake of strong arguments advanced by The American Legion, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. Ray Odierno, and some members of Congress, President Barack Obama has moved to block the release of controversial photographs depicting the abuse of detainees in Iraqi and Afghan prisons.

The photographs were to have been made public by May 28th by Pentagon agreement in response to a court-upheld ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) Freedom of Information Act request.

But, according to news sources, President Obama met with his legal team, telling them that he was uncomfortable with the release of the photographs because their viewing could endanger U.S. troops and compromise national security.

The President's reported meeting nearly coincided with the publication in the Wall Street Journal of an op-ed piece by National Commander David Rehbein of The American Legion raising these same objections. The White House announcement today was made just a couple of hours before the commander was to meet with U.S. Representative Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and national security experts to discuss ways of persuading the Administration to block the photos' release.

"This is the very best news we could hear," said Cmdr. Rehbein upon learning of the President's decision, "and we applaud the President for his response to those, like The American Legion, who are putting the welfare of our troops and our country ahead of political considerations."

The American Legion, celebrating its 90th year in existence this year, is the nation's largest veterans' service organization with 2.6 million members. Its website address is www.legion.org.

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