

# MEDIA MATTERS *for America*<sup>™</sup>

June 1, 2004

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing today to ask you take action to remove Rush Limbaugh from the American Forces Radio and Television Service (formerly known as Armed Forces Radio). Mr. Limbaugh, whose program is broadcast for one hour per day to U.S. troops overseas, has spent the past four weeks condoning and trivializing the abuse, torture, rape and possible murder of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. guards at the Abu Ghraib prison—gross misconduct that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has described as “fundamentally un-American.”

On his May 4 broadcast, Mr. Limbaugh said of the abuse that occurred at Abu Ghraib – abuse so horrific that President Bush wants to demolish the prison -- “This is no different that what happens at the Skull & Bones initiation...I’m talking about people having a good time. These people – you ever heard of emotional release? You ever heard of needing to blow some steam off?” On May 6, Mr. Limbaugh called the abuse a “brilliant maneuver” and compared the photographs to “good old American pornography.”

As recently as May 21, referring to photographs emerging from Abu Ghraib, Mr. Limbaugh said: “The media ought to start making some money off these pictures and videos, not just publishing them free. We need some prison torture, you know, bubble gum cards...you know, like I say, we got baseball cards and bubble gum. Now let’s have terror cards -- only let’s show our prison abuse photos instead of the terrorists and who they are and what they do. We could go coins. We could go medallions.”

Mr. Limbaugh’s commentary is broadcast – at taxpayer expense -- on American Forces Radio to nearly 1 million U.S. troops, stationed in more than 1,000 outlets, in more than 175 countries and U.S territories, including Iraq. According to a May 26 article on Salon.com, the radio network was established “to improve troop morale by giving service members a ‘touch of home’ with American programs overseas.” It is abhorrent that the American taxpayer is paying to broadcast what is in effect pro-torture propaganda to American troops. I have asked Secretary Rumsfeld to consider removing Mr. Limbaugh from the radio network to protect our troops from these reckless and dangerous messages. If Secretary Rumsfeld refuses, I hope you will consider taking any possible steps to eliminate funding for Limbaugh’s program.

Both Secretary Rumsfeld and President Bush have rightly denounced the acts that took place at Abu Ghraib – but American service men and women abroad are getting the wrong message when the Department of Defense simultaneously broadcasts Mr. Limbaugh’s condoning of what Secretary Rumsfeld has called “fundamentally un-American” acts. Mr. Limbaugh’s comments directly contradict orders issued by the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq—which, according to the *Washington Post*, bar “military interrogators from using the most coercive techniques available to them in the past” -- thus undermining the military’s chain of command. The comments may also inflame anti-American sentiment abroad, putting our service men and women at risk.

In addition, I would like to direct your attention to a Media Matters for America report, *Meet the New Rush, Same as the Old Rush*, issued May 2 and available at [www.mediamatters.org](http://www.mediamatters.org), which documents racially-charged and sexist remarks made recently by Mr. Limbaugh on his broadcast. For example, Mr. Limbaugh said on April 26 that women who protest sexual harassment “actually wish” to be sexually harassed. And on March 26, Mr. Limbaugh said, “A Chavez is a Chavez. These people have always been a problem.” Given the extraordinary importance of troop morale and unity during this time of conflict, I would ask you to consider whether it is appropriate for the U.S. government to broadcast such messages, which may sow seeds of discord in the ranks.

The men and women of our military deserve better than to be subjected to a radio host who excuses the worst among their ranks rather than celebrating the best, and who continually uses prejudiced rhetoric that divides rather than unites Americans. I look forward to your response and hope you will send a clear signal to our troops that the United States Congress does not sanction Mr. Limbaugh’s remarks.

Sincerely,

David Brock  
President and CEO  
*Media Matters for America*