

(Washington, D.C.) – The U.S. House of Representatives today approved an amendment to the FY09 Department of Defense (DOD) Authorization Act, which would maximize intelligence derived from interrogations and help prevent detainee abuses such as those that happened in Abu Ghraib. Holt’s amendment would require the videorecording of each strategic interrogation of any person who is in the custody of the DOD or under detention in a DOD facility. These records would be kept at the appropriate level of classification, and would be available to intelligence personnel who could examine them for any potential intelligence benefit. The bill explicitly states that troops in the field in contact with the enemy shall not be required to videotape or otherwise electronically record tactical questioning sessions of detainees. The Senate must now approve the bill.

“Multiple studies have documented the benefits of the videoretaping or electronic recording of interrogations, and law enforcement organizations across the U.S. routinely use the practice both to protect the person being interrogated and the officer conducting the interrogations,” Holt said. “This amendment strengthens previous laws passed by Congress regarding the treatment of detainees and will help maximize our intelligence collection from such interrogations.

A number of U.S. Attorneys are on record as favoring this requirement for the FBI, and the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol routinely videoretapes or electronically records key interactions or interrogations with those in their custody prior to turning over individuals to the Justice Department for possible prosecution.

The United States can successfully conduct the videorecording of detainee interrogations without compromising the safety of U.S. government personnel. Technology exists to mask the faces and voices of interrogators, if necessary.

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