

Somebody Should Arm the Senate Armed Services Committee

By [David Swanson](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

I've never had any use for the Senate Armed Services Committee before, or even for the idea that someone who was armed could provide a service, but the report on U.S. torture policy that the committee released on Thursday is noteworthy. (<http://democrats.com/senate-armed-services-committee-report-on-torture>)

There's nothing new in it. I've read similar reports by lawyers and academics and activist groups with none of the resources of the SASC. The report reaches conclusions we've all known for years: torture has not been the rogue practice of "bad apples," but official policy illegally established by the president and top Bush administration officials in the White House, Pentagon, and Justice Department. This gang requested "legal opinions" as cover for illegalities, produced them, and continued to torture, even while receiving multiple notifications that they were violating the law (as if they hadn't known that when they asked for "opinions" to the contrary).

What's noteworthy about this new report is that it's been noted in the corporate media. Just as someone can be famous for being famous, this report is noteworthy for being noteworthy. Of course, the reason it's been noted in the corporate media is the authoritative status of the committee that produced it. And the reason for that authoritative status is the underlying thought that perhaps the United States Senate might DO something about the crimes it's reporting on. However, we all know that any actual proposal to do anything would have resulted in the story garnering less, and less favorable, attention. This is the paradox of Congress as think tank. Congressional reports get prime real estate in newspapers simply because they're from Congress. But they're just reports, with no follow through, and therefore not actually any different than reports from some other think tank.

Well, there is this difference. Most reports of this nature include a section called "Recommendations." This one does not. Had it included such a section, and had I been permitted to write it, it might have looked something like this:

The House of Representatives should impeach George W. Bush, Richard B. Cheney, William Haynes, Alberto Gonzales, David Addington, Jay Bybee, John Yoo, and Donald Rumsfeld. The Senate should try them, and if they are convicted, bar them from ever again holding federal office of any sort, and deny them any public pensions or benefits. This can and should be done regardless of whether they are currently in office. Witnesses unwilling to appear or to answer questions should be imprisoned by the House or Senate under our inherent contempt power.

The Department of Justice should create an independent prosecutor to prosecute George W.

Bush, Richard B. Cheney, William Haynes, Alberto Gonzales, David Addington, Jay Bybee, John Yoo, Donald Rumsfeld, Ricardo Sanchez, and Geoffrey Miller.

The Congress, the Supreme Court, and the Justice Department should make clear to the president that we will not honor any attempted pardons of crimes that were authorized by the president. To do so would be to effectively eliminate the rule of law.

The International Criminal Court should open its own investigation and pursue the prosecution of the same individuals. The United States should re-sign and the Senate should ratify the treaty establishing said court.

The Senate Armed Services Committee will hold hearings to expose all possible information on the use of torture and any complicity on the part of current or former members of the House or Senate.

The Senate Armed Services Committee will propose to the full Senate legislation banning secret government agencies, rendition, and black sites, closing Guantanamo, repealing the Military Commissions Act of 2006 and the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005, and requiring that all individuals detained without due legal process be immediately released to a nation offering safe refuge or be immediately tried in a civilian court of law.

That's what I would call a properly armed armed services committee.

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David Swanson is the author of the upcoming book "Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union" by Seven Stories Press and of the introduction to "The 35 Articles of Impeachment and the Case for Prosecuting George W. Bush" published by Feral House and available at Amazon.com. Swanson holds a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Virginia. He has worked as a newspaper reporter and as a communications director, with jobs including press secretary for Dennis Kucinich's 2004 presidential campaign, media coordinator for the International Labor Communications Association, and three years as communications coordinator for ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. Swanson is Co-Founder of AfterDowningStreet.org, creator of ConvictBushCheney.org and Washington Director of Democrats.com, a board member of Progressive Democrats of America, the Backbone Campaign, and Voters for Peace, and a member of the legislative working group of United for Peace and Justice.

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