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## **West Pointers, Where Are You?**

**by Jacob G. Hornberger**

More than two years ago, I wrote a series of essays entitled “[Obedience to Orders](#),” in which I suggested that graduates of the professional military academies were much more likely to blindly obey wrongful orders — and much less likely to stand up to their superiors in face of wrongful orders — than graduates of the Virginia Military Institute.

West Pointers inundated me with emails, suggesting that West Pointers themselves would never obey wrongful orders and would have the courage to stand up to their superiors if faced with such orders.

Now, Capt. Ian Fishback, a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, has risked his military career by going outside the military chain of command to disclose systematic and routine torture of Iraqi prisoners and detainees at the hands of U.S. soldiers in Iraq, which included beatings as a form of “recreation” for the troops. The abuse is alleged to have taken place at a different location than Abu Ghraib. Fishback’s allegations provide strong evidence that disputes the Pentagon’s claim that torture and abuse in Iraq was limited to “a few bad apples.” They also suggest that the many Pentagon investigations and reports exonerating higher-ups have been nothing more than [whitewashes](#) and [cover-ups](#).

Capt. Fishback made his disclosures to Human Rights Watch and members of the U.S. Congress only after he had followed proper military channels and was continually rebuffed by his military superiors for 17 months.

By his conduct, Capt. Fishback has displayed the qualities and characteristics of the highest caliber of military officer. I salute him and, in my opinion, he deserves the salute of the entire country for taking a firm stand against wrongdoing by his own government. Interestingly, perhaps because Fishback is a graduate of West Point, no member of Congress is yet accusing him of being “unpatriotic.”

Not surprisingly, Fishback’s revelations are not being well-received by the Pentagon. [According to the Los Angeles Times](#), Fishback is now prohibited from traveling further than 50 miles away from his base at Ft. Bragg, despite the fact that historically freedom of travel has been

recognized as a fundamental right in the United States. In fact, after the Army learned of his meetings with Human Rights Watch, it denied Fishback's request to return to Washington.

Where do other West Pointers stand with respect to Captain Fishback? The issue is black and white for the Long Gray Line:

1. Either Fishback is right and the army is wrong; or
2. Fishback is wrong and the army is right.

Paraphrasing Dante, John F. Kennedy once suggested that "the hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crises maintain their neutrality." Abraham Lincoln once said, "To sin by silence when one should protest makes cowards out of men."

Where are the West Pointers in this battle? Where are their op-eds? Where are their letters to the editor? Where are their emails to the president and Congress? Where are their petitions? Where are their public protests?

Will West Pointers enter onto the field of battle and come to the defense of their fellow West Pointer, Capt. Ian Fishback? Will they help to finally put a stop to the torture of prisoners and detainees and to the Pentagon's whitewashes and cover-ups of the military's torture and sex-abuse scandal? Or will they simply remain silent and walk away?

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