

Insurgents Execute U.S. Army Pfc. "Matt" Maupin?

Pro-Hanoi activism by Senators Kerry and McCain helped strip Pfc. Maupin of any protection under the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War



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Anti-U.S. insurgents, who offered April 16, 2004 to exchange 20-year-old Pfc. Keith Maupin for "imprisoned Iraqi fighters" now claim they have executed the U.S. Army private. Arab satellite station Al-Jazeera aired video in late June showing a blindfolded man, identified as Pfc. Maupin, sitting in front of a dark hole dug in the ground. Al-Jazeera said in the next scene, that gunmen shot the U.S. soldier in the back of the head.

If so, the execution of Pfc. Maupin, of Batavia, Ohio, who U.S. Pentagon officials refused to designate as prisoner of war (POW), came nearly two and one half months after the same officials refused the "Iraqi fighters" offer to exchange Pfc. Maupin.

Pfc Maupin, had been missing in action (MIA) for a week when he was shown unhurt in video footage aired April 16 on Arab TV. Pfc. Maupin was shown surrounded by masked gunmen who offered to exchange him for "imprisoned Iraqi fighters." The gunmen claimed they had more prisoners.

Pentagon officials claim Pfc. Maupin "is not a traditional prisoner of war." They say the official war ended more than a year ago when Saddam Hussein's brutal regime was broken and scattered.

"The young man is a hostage, a person who has been kidnaped," said Lawrence J. Korb, a defense policy analyst who was assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration from 1981 to 1985. International rules of how prisoners of war are to be treated or exchanged do not apply in this case, said Korb, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, a Washington think tank.

The phrase Prisoner of War says two things: First, it says prisoner _ living breathing human being. Second, it says held by the enemy. Prisoner of War is a phrase that arouses the American conscience. America does not leave its POWs behind.

Pentagon pencil pushers say Pfc. Maupin's correct designation is Missing/Captured. This designation is intentionally ambiguous. It is an oxymoron. Is the person missing or captured?

With this relatively new and nebulous designation, the Pentagon is making sure it will never be accused again of leaving POWs behind after the end of the shooting war. Future generations will look at records that read Missing/Captured, a designation that implies no one knew if the individual was Missing or Captured.

This conflicting designation which has quietly striped United States military personnel of any protection of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War is a direct result of collaboration between Senators John Kerry and John McCain during the 1991-93 Senate Select Committee Hearings on POW/MIA Affairs. Both men played prominent rolls in protecting communist Vietnamese officials from being charged with war crimes committed against U.S. POWs during and after the Vietnam War.

Kerry and McCain were responsible for covering up "voluminous evidence that a significant number of live American prisoners were never acknowledged or returned after the Vietnam War.

With their efforts to suppress testimony and sanitize the Select Committee's Final Report to read that all POW/MIAs from the Vietnam War were dead, Kerry and McCain

helped set a precedence that has empowered the Pentagon to create a new policy which declares American service personnel as "hostages" denying them any protection as a prisoner of war. It is against U.S. policy to negotiate for hostages.

In April, when the *U.S. Veteran Dispatch*, a long time POW/MIA advocacy organization, sent a box of bracelets with Pfc. Maupin's name on them to his family members to wear, the organization was told that the family would wear them only if "POW" was removed.

"Technically, Matt is not classified as a POW," Maj. Mark Magalski, a Pentagon service officer who is assisting the family, wrote the organization in an e-mail, "his status remains as 'Captured'. The Maupin family is reluctant to wear the bracelets that say "POW" on them, although it is just a technicality and I am sure that their son has endured similar experiences as former POWs."

The April 16, 2004, TV footage of Pfc. Maupin showed him in a floppy desert hat, sitting on the floor and nervously looking around him. "My name is Keith Matthew Maupin. I am a soldier from the 1st Division," he said, looking into the camera. "I am married with a 10-month-old son. I came to liberate Iraq, but I did not come willingly because I wanted to stay with my child."

In the video, one of the gunmen was heard saying: "We are keeping him to be exchanged for some of the prisoners captured by the occupation forces."

"Some of our groups managed to capture one of the American soldiers, and he is one of many others. He is being treated according to the treatment of prisoners in the Islamic religion and he is in good health," the gunman said on the tape, a copy of which was dropped off at the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar.

Coalition Provisional Authority spokesman Dan Senor responded saying there would be no negotiation with the insurgents about releasing hostages.