



INSPECTOR GENERAL  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
400 ARMY NAVY DRIVE  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22202-4704

## SUPPRESSING SLAVERY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: A DEFINING CHALLENGE

*Remarks as delivered by Department of Defense Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz to Order Of Malta, Federal Association, USA, at the Church of the Little Flower, Bethesda, MD, February 5, 2005.*

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Thank you Ed [Kelly] for that introduction, and thank you to Bill Colliton for inviting me to speak at this “Defense of the Faith talk.” When he invited me to speak, I told Dr. Colliton that I would address the Department of Defense’s ongoing efforts to suppress human slavery, a subject matter about which I have spoken around the world.

After my prepared remarks, I will take questions, and I hope that you will agree with me that the buying and selling of human beings violates, to quote our Commander-in-Chief, “a moral law that stands above men and nations,”<sup>1</sup> but also that our response to this “special evil”<sup>2</sup> will define who we are as Americans and, for those of us who are Members of the Order of Malta, who we are as Knights and Dames of the Sovereign and Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta.

“Be it mine to practice charity toward my neighbors, especially the poor and the sick.”<sup>3</sup> If these words from our Order of Malta daily prayer are to be words by which we live, then those of us who can help ought to help the victims of human trafficking, which are not only “poor and sick,” but whose very human dignity is at risk.

According to official estimates, each year “800,000 to 900,000 human beings are bought, sold or forced across the world’s borders . . . generating billions of dollars.”<sup>4</sup> Organized criminals lure these women, many of them Russians and Filipinos, into sexual slavery by offering to pay them more in a week than they would have dreamed of earning in a year. These young women are typically sent to a foreign country, such as Korea or Bosnia, where their passports are taken away and they are forced to remain in sex slavery ostensibly until they can “buy back” their freedom.

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<sup>1</sup> President George W. Bush, Addresses the United Nations General Assembly (Sept. 23, 2002) at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/09/20030923-4.html>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* (“There’s a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable.”).

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Prayer of the Order*, reprinted as a preface in *A PRAYER COMPANION FOR THE FEDERAL ASSOCIATION, U.S.A., THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM, OF RHODES, AND OF MALTA* (Paulist Press: 1997).

<sup>4</sup> George W. Bush, *supra*; see also United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report 14 (June 2004) (“Trafficking Fuels Organized Crime . . . According to the UN, human trafficking is the third largest criminal enterprise worldwide, generating an estimated 9.5 billion USD in annual revenue according to the U.S. intelligence community. . . . There have also been documented ties to terrorism.”).

I am sure some of you have heard the claim that “prostitution is a victimless crime.” I assure you, it is not – especially for these women. The average life expectancy of these sex slaves is 29 years, and most of them die from venereal diseases.

Overshadowed by the global war on terror, the plight of poor, sick and dying prostitutes half way around the world receives little media attention. I have encountered leaders around the world who are preoccupied with the threat of terrorism and their own physical security. Others are simply apathetic when it comes to the issue prostitution. My experience as Inspector General suggests that we need to focus more on “first things,” – that is, the principles that define who we are and what is worth fighting for.

“[T]he principle of ‘first and second things,’” as C.S. Lewis calls it, “[is] that when second things are put first, not only first things but second things too are lost. More exactly, when there are greater goods, or ultimate ends and proximate ends, if we put lesser goods, like survival, before greater goods, like values to survive for, then we lose not only the greater goods, the values, but even lesser goods that we’ve idolized. . . [T]he society that believes in nothing worth surviving for beyond mere survival will not survive.”<sup>5</sup>

If you understand the principle of “first and second things,” the decisions you must make—while they will not be easier—will be clearer. If we are to remain a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, we must suppress modern-day slavery, which is antithetical to the core principles that underlie our Constitution.

Like terrorism, sexual slavery destroys lives, diminishes the hopes and dreams of many, and breaks the human spirit. In the final analysis, terrorism and sexual slavery have much in common – only the method in which they destroy their victims is different.

In April 2002, after having been appointed to the position of Inspector General of the Department of Defense by the President and confirmed by the Senate, I took a sacred oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. My job is to serve as an “independent extension of the eyes, ears, and conscience” of my Commander, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. It is my statutory duty objectively – the Army calls it “doggedly” – to pursue the truth, and to present my findings to Secretary Rumsfeld, to the Congress, and ultimately to the American People, as plainly as I see it.

Shortly after Congressman Chris Smith, at the time Co-Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and twelve of his congressional

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<sup>5</sup> PETER KREEFT, A REFUTATION OF MORAL RELATIVISM: INTERVIEWS WITH AN ABSOLUTIST 133 (1999); see C.S. Lewis, *Time and Tide*, reprinted in *GOD IN THE DOCK* (1942) (“You can’t get second things by putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first. . . Civilizations have pursued a host of different values in the past: God’s Will, honour, virtues, empire, ritual, glory, mysticism, knowledge. The first and most practical question for ours is to raise the question, to care about the summum bonum, to have something to life for and to die for, lest we die”).

colleagues had expressed concerns about media reports that U.S. military personnel in South Korea were engaged in activities that promote and facilitate the trafficking and exploitation of women, the Secretary of the Army personally called me to request assistance in responding to the May 31, 2002 congressional inquiry. The Army Secretary had mobilized a team of Army Inspectors General who had initiated a Human Trafficking Assessment Project within United States Forces Korea (USFK). The Secretary explained, however, that the Members of Congress expect the project to be “joint and global,” which meant that that Army Inspector General team, as able and engaged as it was, could not fully respond to the congressional concerns.

Before inspecting on the ground in Korea, our “joint and global” inspection team met with various experts in Washington, D.C. and with international anti-trafficking advocates, including the sponsor of anti-trafficking legislation in the Russian Duma. The Russian legislative sponsor expressed little hope in the success of her proposed legislation because, as she explained through a translator, “like most Russian men, the attitude of almost all my brethren in the Duma is that, “They’re just prostitutes.”

As our joint IG team inspected the establishments of Seoul’s *Itaewon* district, it was self-evident not only to our seasoned inspectors—but, more importantly, to our young U.S. Army military police escorts—that the entertainers in the brothels and on the various bar stages of *Itaewon* are not “just prostitutes”; they are human beings first, “endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights,...among [which] are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

According to some Korean officials, most Russian entertainers on “Hooker Hill” and elsewhere in Korea consent to their employment status. According to our Army MP escorts, however, the contracts for these Russian entertainers are sold weekly from one establishment to another. When I asked one of the MPs if he would like to do something about this blatant human trafficking, he unhesitatingly responded in the affirmative, but then added that it was beyond his control. The young soldier was obviously waiting for a signal from the chain-of-command that would empower him to combat this affront to human dignity that, to him, seemed morally wrong. Unbeknownst to this soldier, the top of his USFK chain-of-command had already sent the signal. It just hadn’t made it down to his level—yet.

The next weekend, two teams of U.S. Army military police took on *Itaewon*’s Hooker Hill, leaving 29 entertainment establishments off limits to American GIs – and, if nothing else, sending a strong, principle-based moral message throughout the entire USFK chain-of-command that turning a blind eye to sex slavery is not an option.<sup>6</sup>

The Department of Defense has a “zero tolerance” policy with regard to trafficking in humans. Secretary Rumsfeld recently emphasized that policy by admonishing all leaders in the DoD never to “turn a blind eye” to what our Commander-

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<sup>6</sup> During a May 2004 return visit to Korea, we validated not only that these establishments are still off limits, but that USFK leadership has on its own taken further proactive measure to reaffirm the message that turning a blind eye to immoral practices is not an option.

in-chief, in a 2003 speech to the United Nations General Assembly, singled out a “special evil.”

Yet, women continue to suffer from the scourge of sexual slavery because many in positions of responsibility both here and abroad lack the moral courage to fight for their dignity. And as Edmund Burke warned, “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men (and, I would add, good women) to do nothing.”

Some leaders are cynical and say it is no use to take on the so-called “oldest profession known to man.” Not only do they fail to realize that we will be judged by what we do, and do not do, in this life, but they also forget what our heroic forebears taught us: it does not take a majority to prevail, only a tireless, irate minority. When the signers of the Declaration of Independence met to contemplate the formation of our new nation, few if any foreign governments thought we would succeed. We were, after all, up against the toughest military force in the world at the time. Only a few brave and dedicated visionaries had the faith and moral courage to step forward and assist our founding fathers.

Worse than the cynic, however, is the man with the pernicious attitude that “they’re just prostitutes.” This is the same mentality that engulfed Hitler over a half century ago and our “culture of death” today. A society that loses respect for the dignity of any human being, whatever condition or stage of life it is in, is on the slippery slope of Auschwitz.

To actively subjugate—or even to “turn a blind eye” when others subjugate—any group of humans to a category of existence beneath the dignity of individuals “created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, among which are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,” is, in a word, un-American.

Our forefathers shared a vision of the value of each and every individual. America was built as a nation where the dignity of all human beings was respected and the rights of all were secure. No cause is more important than restoring respect for the right to life because the freedoms we hold so dear cannot endure as long as some lives are regarded as unworthy of protection. Nor can our commitment to defend the dignity of all persons survive if we remain indifferent to the various manifestations of modern-day slavery.

President Bush re-emphasized that vision and commitment in his inaugural address when he said: “Today, America speaks anew to the peoples of the world: All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The White House, Press Release, *President Sworn-in to Second Term* (Jan. 20, 2005) at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050120-1.html>.

The inviolable moral truth about human trafficking and its associated underworld activities is that these practices are affronts to human dignity. Regardless of any alleged consent by the parties involved, these activities:

- debase human beings and suppress human freedom
- compromise inalienable rights to liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and
- constitute immoral practices proscribed (and prescribed) by Congress.

In the Anglo-American tradition, our national legislatures prescribe the national conscience through public laws, legislating what is right and what is wrong for the nation – *i.e.*, what choices we ought and ought not to make. Of course, as with any individual conscience formation process, there is always the possibility that this societal conscience be mis-formed, *i.e.*, inconsistent with a higher law. This is why President George W. Bush said we should always do “not only what is legal, but what is right.”<sup>8</sup>

President Reagan, in his famous “ash heap of history” speech to the British House of Commons, described our country’s enduring contribution to mankind as three principles steeped in the legal tradition of England: “individual responsibility, representative government, and the rule of law under God.”<sup>9</sup> Our current Commander-in-Chief has likewise admonished that we have a moral obligation to follow a rule of law that “stands above the laws of man and of nations.”<sup>10</sup>

John Adams admonished that, “Our Constitution was made only for a religious and moral people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”<sup>11</sup> If we are to continue to support and defend our Constitution, then we must hold ourselves to a very high moral standard as our armed forces do.

Article 1 of the 1775 “Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies of North America,” which John Adams drafted and the Continental Congress enacted, reads in its entirety: “The Commanders of all ships and vessels belonging to the THIRTEEN UNITED COLONIES, are strictly required to shew in themselves a good example of honor and virtue to their officers and men, and to be very vigilant in inspecting the behaviour of all such as are under them, and to discountenance and suppress all dissolute, immoral and disorderly practices; and also, such as are contrary to the rules of discipline and obedience, and to correct those who are guilty of the same according to the usage of the sea.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The White House, Press Release, President Honors Public Servants (Oct. 15, 2001) at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011015-8.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Reagan, Speech to the House of Commons (June 18, 1982) at [www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1982reagan1.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1982reagan1.html).

<sup>10</sup> President George W. Bush, Address to the United Nations General Assembly, *supra*.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from John Adams to the Officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts (Oct. 11, 1798) in 9 WORKS OF JOHN ADAMS: SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES 229 (C.F. Adams, ed. 1854); see JAMES H. HUTSON, RELIGION AND THE FOUNDING OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC 57-58 (1998).

<sup>12</sup> Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies of North-America (William and Thomas Bradford, Philadelphia 1775) reprinted by Naval Historical Foundation, Washington, D.C. (1944). See also article at <http://www.history.navy.mil/>.

A century later, shortly after the Civil War, the United States Supreme Court sustained the court martial of an Army captain for “conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.”<sup>13</sup> In the same case, the Court of Claims had explained, “We learnt as law students of Blackstone that there are things which are *malum in se*, in addition to them, things which are merely *malum prohibitum*; but unhappily in the affairs of real life we find that there are many things which are *malum in se* without likewise being *malum prohibitum*. In military life there is a higher code termed honor, which holds its society to stricter accountability; and it is not desirable that the standard of the Army shall come down to the requirements of a criminal code.”<sup>14</sup>

As Knights and Dames of Malta, we too have a higher standard: “to practice charity toward our neighbors, especially the poor and the sick.”

We should be inspired by St. Therese of the Little Flower, who taught us through the example of her life that we are defined by the little things we do. She taught us that we could seek holiness in the ordinary and the everyday. This was her “little way.” Her life was so ordinary and routine, yet extraordinarily happy, because it was steeped in an undying love for God. She understood that interior peace came not from self-indulgence, but self-sacrifice motivated by love for God.

In her novel, *Running to Paradise*, Frances Bremer (a member of Little Flower Parish, by the way) writes about the importance of having a “marathoner’s mentality.” Each step is not that important, but they can add up to something really big. She tells a story about a 13 year old boy named Jeff, who tried to commit suicide because he hated the monotony of life. He felt as if everyday was the same: he would go to his boring classes, do his boring homework, fall behind in math and science, get hassled by his parents for not getting good grades like his older brothers, etc. But when a kindly priest, Fr. Frank, came to visit Jeff in the hospital, he used a play on words to explain that just as most of the Church year is “Ordinary Time,” most of our time is quite ordinary.

Whether we like it or not, we must accept this fact and learn to deal with it. St. Theresa dealt with it by including God in everything: every pain, sorrow, banality of life, every time she felt that she could not stand what she had to do, etc.

To do this requires real courage – the type of courage that Teddy Roosevelt spoke of when he said, “Courage is not having the strength to go on, but going on when you don’t have the strength.”<sup>15</sup>

Like all moral virtues, courage comes about as a result of a habit. It is not natural. Aristotle explained, “The virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the

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<sup>13</sup> United States v. Fletcher, 148 U.S. 84, 91-92 (1893).

<sup>14</sup> Fletcher v. United States, 26 Ct. Cl. 541, 562-63 (1891), *quoted with approbation in* Parker v. Levy, 417 U.S. 733, 765 (1974) (Blackmun, J. joined by Burger, C.J., concurring).

<sup>15</sup> Cited at <http://www.federalistpatriot.us/>.

lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.”<sup>16</sup>

Becoming virtuous is not an easy task, which is why Mark Twain said the golden rule for acquiring the habit of doing your duty without pain is to do something every day that you don't want to do.<sup>17</sup>

As Inspector General, I often hearken back to George Washington's Inspector General throughout the Revolutionary War, who trained the fledgling American militia and instilled in it the values of order, discipline, hard work, precision, and integrity. The American Army Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben found when he reached Valley Forge in 1778 was seriously lacking in many of these attributes, being an all-volunteer militia of citizen-soldiers with few uniform standards of military operations, decorum, and organization.

President William Howard Taft, at the 1910 dedication of a Monument to Baron von Steuben in Washington, D.C., made the following observations: “The effects of Steuben's instruction in the American Army teaches us a lesson that is well for us to keep in mind, and that is that no people, no matter how warlike in spirit and ambition, in natural courage and self-confidence, can be made at once, by uniform and guns, a military force. Until they learn drill and discipline, they are a mob, and the theory that they can be made into an army overnight has cost this nation billions of dollars and thousands of lives.”<sup>18</sup>

So too should we keep in mind that no matter how charitable in spirit towards the poor and the sick, we must discipline ourselves in charitable acts towards the poor and sick, which includes the victims of sexual slavery, if we want to follow in the footsteps of the first Knights of our Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order, who centuries ago cared for pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land.

Only by constantly doing charitable acts, whether it be through our prayers, financial donations or the giving of our time and talent, will we become charitable.

Committing a charitable act here and there does not make us charitable. Reverting back to the wisdom of Aristotle, “Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man would do; but it is not the man who does these that is just and temperate, but the man who also does them as just and temperate men do them. It is well said, then, that it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 2 ARISTOTLE, NICOMACHEAN ETHICS, ch. 1, 1103a 33 – 1103b 3.

<sup>17</sup> Cited at <http://www.twainquotes.com/Duty.html> (from MARK TWAIN, FOLLOWING THE EQUATOR, *Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar*).

<sup>18</sup> William Howard Taft, *Address of the President of the United States*, reproduced in UNVEILING OF THE STATUE OF BARON VON STEUBEN (1910).

<sup>19</sup> 2 ARISTOTLE, NICOMACHEAN ETHICS, ch. 4, 1105b 5-12.

Virtues are good habits, which will be attained only through practice. The case of Aristotle's contemporary Demosthenes illustrates the point. Demosthenes had great ambition to become an orator, but suffered natural limitations as a speaker. Strong desire is essential, but by itself is insufficient. According to Plutarch, "His inarticulate and stammering pronunciation he overcame and rendered more distinct by speaking with pebbles in his mouth." If we give ourselves an even greater challenge than the one we are trying to master, we will develop the powers necessary to overcome the original difficulty.

Demosthenes used a similar strategy in training his voice, which "he disciplined by declaiming and reciting speeches or verses when he was out of breath, while running or going up steep places." And to keep himself studying without interruption "two or three months together," he shaved "one half of his head, that so for shame he might not go abroad, though he desired it ever so much."<sup>20</sup>

I will close my remarks today by reiterating the importance of understanding why we ought to do whatever we can to suppress human slavery: not only is our country's survival dependent upon us putting "first things first," but we are defining ourselves and we will be judged, by the little things we do.

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<sup>20</sup> WILLIAM BENNETT, *THE BOOK OF VIRTUES* 22 (1993).