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Letters to the Editor

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'VINDICATING DOUGLAS FEITH'

The ugliness of which Washington politicians and their allies in the press are capable is well known. But the meanness attendant on the continuing use of distortion and innuendo to injure the Bush administration by maligning the former undersecretary of defense for policy, Douglas J. Feith, is at the low end of ugly and unfair. It stands as a continuing caution to all talented men and women who might consider serving in high public office.

Almost from the onset of the 2003 war in Iraq, Mr. Feith was under attack by Senator Levin and his press allies opposed to the war or to the war's conduct, especially the New York Times. Mr. Feith's alleged offense was directing his staff to consider all available information in evaluating Central Intelligence Agency "estimates" and analyses, to reach their own conclusions, and to report them to him. He, in turn, would share the results with higher officials as he and they deemed beneficial to the cause of good policy.

The most terrible of the alleged crimes was that Mr. Feith and his staff disagreed with the CIA as to some matters. Never mind that CIA "estimates" and analyses that informed policy were sometimes incorrect and warranted informed and thoughtful evaluation. The attack on Mr. Feith continued in the year and a half following his departure from the Pentagon while he began teaching at Georgetown University and began working on a book about his years in the Pentagon.

The Pentagon inspector general's report just issued after an investigation inspired by the attackers completely exonerated Mr. Feith from engaging in any illegal or unauthorized activity. Although the inspector general inexplicably found "inappropriate" Mr. Feith and his staff doing an independent analysis and reporting to senior officials certain of his and his staff's disagreements with the CIA, the activities in which Mr. Feith had his staff engage constituted exactly the kind of penetrating questioning and criticism of CIA output that the 9/11 Commission, the Silberman Commission, and others deem necessary to reduce serious policy mistakes based on inadequate or inaccurate intelligence.

The inspector general plainly found that this "inappropriate" conduct was legal and authorized. The findings of the inspector general apparently won't be the end of Senator Levin and his press allies' political attacks on the administration through attacks on Mr. Feith. The newspaper whose motto is "all the news that's fit to print" but whose operating editorial guideline seems to be "all the news that fits our agenda we print," kept on the attack last week.

Purporting to report the "significant" news that Mr. Feith and the National Defense University by mutual

agreement in August 2006 cancelled a July 2006 teaching contract to exploit for NDU students the considerable defense and national security accomplishments Mr. Feith can claim, the Times implies that, notwithstanding that the cancellation was by "mutual decision," NDU actually changed its mind about the merit of Mr. Feith's accomplishments. This is adroitly accomplished by reciting the Feith accomplishments listed as the basis for NDU signing the now cancelled contract and blithely and maliciously asserting that the inspector general "criticized Mr. Feith's work at the Pentagon." Shame on the attackers.

JACK DAVID
New York, N.Y.

Mr. David was for the two years prior to October 2006 deputy assistant secretary of defense for combating weapons of mass destruction and negotiations policy. Since mid-2003, he has served as a member of the Board of Visitors of the National Defense University.