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***Media Matters for America* Asks Secretary Rumsfeld To Remove Limbaugh's Radio Show from Taxpayer-Funded American Forces Radio**

LIMBAUGH'S COMMENTARY ENDANGERS OUR TROOPS

(May 26, 2004, Washington, DC) - *Media Matters for America* President and CEO David Brock today sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld requesting that Secretary Rumsfeld consider removing radio host Rush Limbaugh from the American Forces Radio and Television Service (formerly known as Armed Forces Radio). Limbaugh, whose program is broadcast for one hour per day to U.S. troops overseas, has spent the past four weeks condoning and trivializing the abuse, torture, rape and possible murder of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. guards at the Abu Ghraib prison—gross misconduct that Rumsfeld has described as “fundamentally un-American.”

Limbaugh's show is broadcast for one hour per day on the American Forces Network, at taxpayer expense, to nearly 1 million US troops stationed in more than 1,000 outlets in more than 175 countries and U.S territories, including Iraq.

“It is abhorrent that the American taxpayer is paying to broadcast what is in effect pro-torture propaganda to American troops,” *Media Matters for America* President and CEO David Brock wrote to Secretary Rumsfeld. “I ask you to consider removing Mr. Limbaugh from the radio network to protect our troops from these reckless and dangerous messages.”

Brock added that Limbaugh's comments -- which contradict orders issued by the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq barring many previously-available coercive techniques -- “undermine the military's chain of command and may also inflame anti-American sentiment abroad, putting our service men and women at risk.”

The controversy surrounding Limbaugh's comments began when he said on May 4, “This is no different that what happens at the Skull & Bones initiation...I'm talking about people having a good time. These people – you ever heard of emotional release? You ever heard of needing to blow some steam off?”

Limbaugh has continued his irresponsible commentary as recently as May 21, the most recent show he has hosted, by suggesting ways to capitalize on the torture photos...“The media ought to start making some money off these pictures and videos, not just

publishing them free. We need some prison torture, you know, bubble gum cards... You know, like I say, we got baseball cards and bubble gum. Now, let's have terror cards – only, let's show our prison abuse photos instead of the terrorists and who they are and what they do. We could go coins. We could go medallions.”

Brock also noted in his letter to Rumsfeld that a May 2 Media Matters for America report, *Meet the New Rush, Same as the Old Rush*, documented recent racially-charged and sexist remarks made by Limbaugh on his broadcast. For example, Limbaugh said on April 26 that women who protest sexual harassment “actually wish” to be sexually harassed. And on March 26, Limbaugh said, “A Chavez is a Chavez. These people have always been a problem.” Noting the “importance of troop morale and unity during this time of conflict,” Brock asked Secretary Rumsfeld to “review whether it is appropriate for the U.S. government to broadcast such messages, which may sow seeds of discord in the ranks.”

“As we approach Memorial Day, and as Americans honor our soldiers, the men and women of our military deserve better than to be subjected to a radio host who excuses the worst among their ranks rather than celebrating the best, and who continually uses prejudiced rhetoric that divides rather than unites Americans,” Brock concluded.

Also today, Media Matters for America launched a petition to give the American people an opportunity to express their disapproval of the broadcast of Limbaugh's irresponsible and divisive comments on American Forces radio.

Media Matters for America's letter to Secretary Rumsfeld, our petition, excerpts of Limbaugh's commentary, and other analyses of conservative misinformation, can be found at the *Media Matters for America* website: www.mediamatters.org.

Media Matters for America is a Web-based, not-for-profit, progressive research and information center dedicated to comprehensively monitoring, analyzing, and correcting conservative misinformation in the U.S. media. Media Matters for America is the first organization to systematically monitor the media for conservative misinformation – every day, in real time – in 2004 and beyond.. For more information, log on to <http://www.mediamatters.org>.