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## **Negroponete, a Torturer's Friend**

by **Matthew Rothschild**

Bush's announcement that he intends to appoint John Negroponete to be the U.S. ambassador to Iraq should appall anyone who respects human rights.

Negroponete, currently U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., was U.S. ambassador to Honduras in the 1980s and was intimately involved with Reagan's dirty war against the Sandinistas of Nicaragua. Reagan waged much of that illegal contra war from Honduras, and Negroponete was his point man.

According to a detailed investigation the Baltimore Sun did in 1995, Negroponete covered up some of the most grotesque human rights abuses imaginable.

The CIA organized, trained, and financed an army unit called Battalion 316, the paper said. Its specialty was torture. And it kidnapped, tortured, and killed hundreds of Hondurans, the Sun reported. It "used shock and suffocation devices in interrogations. Prisoners often were kept naked and, when no longer useful, killed and buried in unmarked graves."

The U.S. embassy in Honduras knew about the human rights abuses but did not want this embarrassing information to become public, the paper said.

"Determined to avoid questions in Congress, U.S. officials in Honduras concealed evidence of human rights abuses," the Sun reported. Negroponete has denied involvement, and prior to his confirmation by the Senate for his U.N. post, he testified, "I do not believe that death squads were operating in Honduras."

But this is what the Baltimore Sun said: "The embassy was aware of numerous kidnappings of leftists." It also said that Negroponete played an active role in whitewashing human rights abuses.

"Specific examples of brutality by the Honduran military typically never appeared in the human rights reports, prepared by the embassy under the direct supervision of Ambassador Negroponete," the paper wrote. "The reports from Honduras were carefully crafted to leave the impression that the Honduran military respected human rights."

So this is the man who is going to show the Iraqis the way toward democracy?

More likely, as the insurgency increases, this will be the man who will oversee and hush up any brutal repression that may ensue.

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