# The Impertinence Of Our So-Called Allies

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Should the United States permit Gen. Tommy R. Franks, head of the U.S. Central Command, to be prosecuted in a court in Belgium for alleged war crimes during the Iraq war? Most Americans would say, you have to be kidding; that could never happen.
But little Belgium, trying to be a player on the world stage, has adopted what it calls a universal-jurisdiction law. It purports to give Belgium jurisdiction over war crimes committed anywhere in the world and give Belgian judges the authority to hear complaints brought by anyone.

Already on file is not only a complaint against Gen. Franks, but also against former President Bush, retired Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Vice President Cheney, for alleged war crimes against civilians when they bombed a Baghdad bunker during the first Gulf War; and against both Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Yasser Arafat.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld properly and publicly lowered the boom on uppity Belgium last week. He said the United States will provide no funds for the new NATO headquarters unless Belgium repeals this law.

Brussels has been host to NATO since 1967. NATO (which long since completed its genuine mission of keeping Soviet troops out of Western Europe) is now kept on life support in order to continue channeling U.S. taxpayer funds to Europe.

NATO is planning to pretend it has a reason for existence by building a $352.4 million futuristic headquarters in Belgium. U.S. taxpayers are expected to pony up a least 22 percent of the cost.

In Brussels last week, Secretary Rumsfeld said, "If the civilian and military leaders of member states cannot come to Belgium without fear of harassment by Belgian courts enforcing spurious charges by political prosecutors, then it calls into question Belgium's attitude about its responsibilities as a host nation."

Rumsfeld said the Belgian law "has turned its legal system into a platform for divisive politicized lawsuits against her NATO allies." He added that it doesn't make sense for the U.S. to build a headquarters in Belgium if U.S. officials can't come to Belgium without fear of being arrested, and "I've just stated a fact."

Meanwhile, the Netherlands is trying to move to the center of the world stage with the International Criminal Court (ICC), headquartered in the Hague. The ICC bureaucrats, who are pseudo judges pretentiously asserting the power to enforce pseudo law, assert jurisdiction over U.S. citizens even though we are not and never will be a party to the treaty and no international law can bind a country that didn't sign a treaty consenting to be bound by it.

One of President Clinton's last official acts was his New Year's Eve signing of the International Criminal Court (ICC) Treaty, but it was never ratified by our Senate. President George W. Bush courageously stood up for American sovereignty when he took the unprecedented step of "unsigning" the treaty.

Last year, the United Nations Security Council reluctantly deigned to grant the United States a one-year grace period from the risk of having U.S. soldiers on overseas peacekeeping missions arrested for prosecution by the ICC. Our so-called allies were worried that they would have to take over the costs of peacekeeping in Bosnia if U.S. troops pulled out.

The Bush Administration has been trying to cajole separate nations into signing promises that they won't arrest Americans stationed on their territory. So far, 38 such agreements have been signed but that doesn't include most of the major governments.

The one-year exemption granted by the UN last year just expired, and the UN Security Council reluctantly approved a one-year extension. France, Germany and Syria abstained, 17 countries spoke out against us, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan undiplomatically sneered at the U.S. exemption.

Our so-called European allies, whom American blood and treasure have again and again protected against military aggression and economic ruin, deserve a prize for impertinence. We should nip in the bud the heady hopes of the pompous bureaucrats in the Hague and Brussels, who were not elected by anybody yet dream they can exercise global judicial power.

U.S. officials don't need to pussyfoot around with the niceties of diplomatic language. They should say, "Bug off. America already enjoys the rule of law that best protects human rights, our Bill of Rights is not up for negotiation with foreigners, and we will not subject our citizens to rules or judges in foreign countries."

Fortunately, we have moved on from the era of President Clinton, who told the United Nations in 1997 that he wanted to put the United States into a "web of institutions" to set "the international ground rules for the 21st century." We now have a President who will stand up for American sovereignty.

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