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by NCR Editorial Staff

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In the Age of Trump, it is hard not to feel at times like the moral universe is inverted. If St. Thomas Aquinas were alive, he would have a bad case of vertigo.

On Nov. 15, President Donald Trump announced he was issuing a pardon to three service members accused or convicted of war crimes. Yes, war crimes. Former Army 1st Lt. Clint Lorance was serving a 19-year sentence for murdering civilians in Afghanistan. His actions endangered every other member of the U.S. military, but Trump isn't one for thinking of consequences. Lorance also was convicted of covering up his crimes.

Army Maj. Mathew Golsteyn was accused of killing an Afghan civilian and was awaiting his trial when the pardon was issued. Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher was alleged to have stabbed an ISIS fighter during surgery and threatening to kill subordinates if they told anyone. He was acquitted on the most serious charges but convicted of posing for a photograph with a corpse. Memories of Abu Ghraib come to mind, and the anti-American hatred stoked by that round of war crimes.

Our president famously avoided serving in the military due to bone spurs. So, perhaps he doesn't understand that U.S. soldiers are not, as he tweeted earlier this year, "killing machines." In fact, the counterinsurgency field manual states that "A defection is better than a surrender, a surrender better than a capture, and a capture better than a kill." And: "An operation that kills five insurgents is counterproductive if the collateral damage or the creation of blood feuds leads to the recruitment of 50 more." The president's decision to pardon these war crimes is not just immoral, it is also at cross purposes with the goals the military has set if our country is ever to bring the troops home.

As morally repugnant as Trump's pardons were, they were matched in ethical grotesqueness by his attacks on lifelong patriots who have served this country in a variety of challenging circumstances.



Marie Yovanovitch, former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, testifies Nov. 15 in Washington before a House Intelligence Committee hearing as part of the

impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump. (CNS/Reuters/Jim Bourg)

Marie Yovanovitch served as ambassador to Kyrgyzstan and later to Armenia before being sent to Ukraine. None of these assignments is the kind bestowed upon campaign donors. They all are on the frontlines of Russia's attempt to roll back the demise of the Soviet Union. She became the target of a smear campaign while serving in Ukraine, was finally sacked and was the object of intimidating tweets from the president while she was testifying before Congress.

The current acting ambassador, William Taylor, was not attacked directly by the president when he testified before the House Intelligence Committee. Congressional Republicans, however, tried to portray him as a gossip, trafficking in second- and third-hand information. Taylor did not have bone spurs. In Vietnam, he earned a Bronze Star Medal and an Air Medal. As a diplomat, he has served in Iraq and Afghanistan, among other assignments.

George Kent also testified in the impeachment inquiry. He is currently the deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs. He has served in Warsaw, Poland, and Kyiv, Ukraine, and was also the director of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. He has served the American people since 1992, when Trump was still trying to make his millions running casinos in Atlantic City.

"A World Turned Upside Down" is popularly believed to be a song that the British army band played during the surrender ceremonies at Yorktown, the final battle in our War of Independence. "Yet let's be content, and the times lament, you see the world turn'd upside down," is the last line of each stanza. These, too, are times to lament. The world is turn'd upside down. And, America's destiny is in the balance. But, let no one "be content." It is time to express our outrage. And organize.

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