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Geneva Conventions

Re: "Bush signs into law new rules on handling terror suspects," Oct. 18:

As a hospital corpsman with a Marine infantry unit in Vietnam in 1970, I had noncombatant status under the Geneva Conventions because of my medical duties, i.e. providing emergency care for the wounded. I did everything the Marines did - went on patrols, walked through minefields, slept on the ground, etc. - but I never shot a weapon.

I am extremely grateful and privileged that my medical duties classified me as a noncombatant. For me, the Geneva Conventions offered the hope of decency, sanity and the sanctity of human rights in the chaos and violence of the war.

The Military Commissions Act of 2006, allowing the president to "interpret the meaning and application" of the Geneva Conventions, is appalling. The Geneva Conventions still offer the hope of decency, sanity and the sanctity of human rights; they should be respected by our government, not trampled in the name of fighting terrorism.

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