

Advertisement

[washingtonpost.com](#) > [World](#) > [Middle East](#) > [Iraq](#) > [Editorials](#)

EDITORIAL

## Torture Policy

Wednesday, June 16, 2004; Page A26

SLOWLY, AND IN spite of systematic stonewalling by the Bush administration, it is becoming clearer why a group of military guards at Abu Ghraib prison tortured Iraqis in the ways depicted in those infamous photographs. President Bush and his spokesmen shamefully cling to the myth that the guards were rogues acting on their own. Yet over the past month we have learned that much of what the guards did -- from threatening prisoners with dogs, to stripping them naked, to forcing them to wear women's underwear -- had been practiced at U.S. military prisons elsewhere in the world. Moreover, most of these techniques were sanctioned by senior U.S. officials, including Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and the Iraqi theater command under Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez. Many were imported to Iraq by another senior officer, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller.

▼ ADVERTISING

In December 2002, Mr. Rumsfeld approved a series of harsh questioning methods for use at the Guantanamo Bay base. According to the Wall Street Journal, these included the removal of clothing, the use of "stress positions," hooding, "fear of dogs," and "mild non-injurious physical contact." Even before that, the Journal reported, interrogators at Guantanamo forced prisoners to wear women's underwear on their heads. A year later, when some of the same treatment was publicized through the Abu Ghraib photographs, Mr. Rumsfeld described it as "grievous and brutal abuse and cruelty."

Administration officials

-  [E-Mail This Article](#)
-  [Print This Article](#)
-  [Permission to Republish](#)

- Today's Post Editorials**———
- [What's in a Name?](#) (Post, June 22, 2004)
  - [A Temp for School Chief?](#) (Post, June 22, 2004)
  - [Drug Card Confusion](#) (Post, June 22, 2004)

- What's Your Opinion?**———
- Share Your Views About Editorials and Opinion Pieces on Our [Message Boards](#)
  - [About Message Boards](#)
- 

- News From Iraq**———
- [Bush Says He'll Defer to New Iraqi Leaders](#) (The Washington Post, Jun 16, 2004)
  - [Gen. Casey Named to Head Forces in Iraq](#) (The Washington Post, Jun 16, 2004)
  - [U.S. May Cede Legal Custody Of Hussein](#) (The Washington Post, Jun 16, 2004)
  - [More News from Iraq](#)

have said that tougher techniques are available at Guantanamo, where the Geneva Conventions are considered inapplicable, than in Iraq, where they unquestionably apply. Yet through much of the past year, the opposite appears to have been the case. After strenuous protests from legal professionals inside the military, Mr. Rumsfeld ordered a review of interrogation techniques in early 2003 that led, in April that year, to the dropping of a number of methods at Guantanamo that he had earlier approved, including the use of dogs, stress positions and nudity.

Later, several of the techniques that were banned in Guantanamo were adopted in Iraq. In late August and September 2003 Gen. Miller visited Abu Ghraib with the mandate to improve interrogations. Senior officers have testified to Congress that he brought "harsh" techniques from Guantanamo. Gen. Sanchez's command then issued a policy that included the use of stress positions and dogs, along with at least five of seven exceptional techniques approved by Mr. Rumsfeld in the revised Guantanamo policy. After further objections from uniformed lawyers, Gen. Sanchez modified the policy in mid-October, but interrogators and guards at Abu Ghraib went on using the earlier

rules. They were committing crimes, but they were not improvising: Most of what they did originally had been sanctioned by both the defense secretary and U.S. Central Command.

It's not clear why interrogation techniques judged improper or illegal by a Pentagon legal

—Commentary—

- [Bush's 'Him-Too' Strategy](#) (The Washington Post, Jun 15, 2004)
- [Damage Control in Iraq](#) (The Washington Post, Jun 13, 2004)
- [Belarus's Terrorist Ties](#) (The Washington Post, Jun 12, 2004)

—Editorials—

- [Mr. Bush's Mismatch](#) (The Washington Post, Jun 13, 2004)
- [A Summit for the Future](#) (The Washington Post, Jun 8, 2004)
- [Remedies for Prisoner Abuse](#) (The Washington Post, Jun 7, 2004)

—Free E-mail Newsletters—

- [News Headlines](#)
- [News Alert](#)

[Subscribe to](#) **The Washington Post**

team were subsequently adopted in Iraq. Nor is it clear what those standards are today, either in Iraq or elsewhere -- breaking with decades of previous practice, the Bush administration has classified them. Congressional leaders who have vowed to get to the bottom of the prisoner abuse scandal still have much to learn; they will not succeed unless the scale and pace of their investigations are stepped up.

The Senate, however, has an opportunity today to directly address the mess the administration has made of interrogation policy and of America's global standing. An amendment to the defense authorization bill, sponsored by Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.), would reaffirm the commitment of the United States not to engage in torture, and it would require the defense secretary to provide Congress with guidelines ensuring compliance with this standard. Sadly, the Bush administration's policy decisions have cast doubt on whether this country accepts this fundamental principle of human rights. Congress should insist that it does.

© 2004 The Washington Post Company



Advertisement

washingtonpost.com

PRINT EDITION | [Subscribe to The Washington Post](#)

[NEWS](#) | [OPINION](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [ARTS & LIVING](#) | [ENTERTAINMENT](#)

[Discussions](#) | [Photos & Video](#)

[JOBS](#) | [CARS](#) | [REAL ESTATE](#)

[washingtonpost.com: Contact Us](#) | [About washingtonpost.com](#)

[E-mail Newsletters](#) | [Archives](#) | [Wireless Access](#) | [Media Center](#) | [Advertise](#)  
[mywashingtonpost.com](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [Our Headlines on Your Site](#)  
[Rights and Permissions](#) | [Make Us Your Home Page](#)  
[Work at washingtonpost.com](#) | [Internships](#) | [Site Index](#)

**The Washington Post:** [Subscribe](#) | [Subscriber Services](#)  
[Advertise](#) | [Electronic Edition](#) | [Online Photo Store](#)

**The Washington Post Co.:** [Information](#)  
[Other Washington Post Co. Websites](#)

SEARCH:  News [Web by Google](#)

[Top 20 E-mailed Articles](#)

[User Agreement and Privacy Policy](#) | © Copyright 1996-2004 The Washington Post Company