



## UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

### **Army, CIA want torture truths exposed**

By Martin Sieff  
UPI Senior News Analyst  
Published 5/18/2004 7:16 AM

WASHINGTON, May 18 (UPI) -- Efforts at the top level of the Bush administration and the civilian echelon of the Department of Defense to contain the Iraq prison torture scandal and limit the blame to a handful of enlisted soldiers and immediate senior officers have already failed: The scandal continues to metastasize by the day.

Over the past weekend and into this week, devastating new allegations have emerged putting Stephen Cambone, the first Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, firmly in the crosshairs and bringing a new wave of allegations cascading down on the head of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, when he scarcely had time to catch his breath from the previous ones.

Even worse for Rumsfeld and his coterie of neo-conservative true believers who have run the Pentagon for the past 3½ years, three major institutions in the Washington power structure have decided that after almost a full presidential term of being treated with contempt and abuse by them, it's payback time.

Those three institutions are: The United States Army, the Central Intelligence Agency and the old, relatively moderate but highly experienced Republican leadership in the United States Senate.

None of those groups is chopped liver: Taken together they comprise a devastating Grand Slam.

The spearhead for the new wave of revelations and allegations - but by no means the only source of them - is veteran investigative journalist Seymour Hersh. In a major

article published in the New Yorker this week and posted on to its Web-site Saturday, Hersh revealed that a high-level Pentagon operation code-named Copper Green "encouraged physical coercion and sexual humiliation" of Iraqi prisoners. He also cited Pentagon sources and consultants as saying that photographing the victims of such abuse was an explicit part of the program meant to force the victims into becoming blackmailed reliable informants.

Hersh further claimed in his article that Rumsfeld himself approved the program and that one of his four or five top aides, Cambone, set it up in Baghdad and ran it.

These allegations of course are anathema to the White House, Rumsfeld and their media allies. In a highly unusual step for any newspaper, the editorially neo-conservative tabloid New York Post ran an editorial Monday seeking to ridicule and discredit Hersh. However, it presented absolutely no evidence to query, let alone discredit the substance of his article and allegations.

Instead, the New York Post editorial inadvertently pointed out one, but by no means all, of the major sources for Hersh's information. The editorial alleged that Hersh had received much of his material from the CIA.

Based on the material Hersh quoted, his legendary intelligence community contacts were probably sources for some of his information. However, Hersh has also enjoyed close personal relations with many now high-ranking officers in the United States Army, going all the way back to his prize-winning coverage and scoops in Vietnam more than 30 years ago.

Indeed, intelligence and regular Army sources have told UPI that senior officers and officials in both communities are sickened and outraged by the revelations of mass torture and abuse, and also by the incompetence involved, in the Abu Ghraib prison revelations. These sources also said that officials all the way up to the highest level in both the Army and the Agency are determined not to be scapegoated, or allow very junior soldiers or officials to take the full blame for the excesses.

President George W. Bush in his weekly radio address

Saturday claimed that the Abu Ghraib abuses were only "the actions of a few" and that they did not "reflect the true character of the United States armed forces."

But what enrages many serving senior Army generals and U. S. top-level intelligence community professionals is that the "few" in this case were not primarily the serving soldiers who were actually encouraged to carry out the abuses and even then take photos of the victims, but that they were encouraged to do so, with the Army's well-established safeguards against such abuses deliberately removed by high-level Pentagon civilian officials.

Abuse and even torture of prisoners happens in almost every war on every side. But well-run professional armies, and the U.S. Army has always been one, take great pains to guard against it and limit it as much as possible. Even in cases where torture excesses are regarded as essential to extract tactical information and save lives, commanders in most modern armies have taken care to limit such "dirty work" to very small units, usually from special forces, and to keep it as secret as possible.

For senior Army professionals know that allowing patterns of abuse and torture to metastasize in any army is annihilating to its morale and tactical effectiveness. Torturers usually make lousy combat soldiers, which is why combat soldiers in every major army hold them in contempt.

Therefore, several U.S. military officers told UPI, the idea of using regular Army soldiers, including some even just from the Army Reserve or National Guard, and encouraging them to inflict such abuses ran contrary to received military wisdom and to the ingrained standards and traditions of the U.S. Army.

The widespread taking of photographs of the victims of such abuses, they said, clearly revealed that civilian "amateurs" and not regular Army or intelligence community professionals were the driving force in shaping and running the programs under which these abuses occurred.

Hersh has spearheaded the waves of revelations of shocking abuse. But other major U.S. media organizations are now charging in behind him to confirm and extend his reports.

They are able to do so because many senior veteran professionals in both the CIA and the Army were disgusted by the revelations of the torture excesses. Now they are being listened to with suddenly receptive ears on Capitol Hill.

Republican members in the House of Representatives have kept discipline and silence on the revelations. But with the exception of the increasingly isolated and embarrassed Senate Republican Leader, Bill Frist of Tennessee, other senior mainstream figures in the GOP Senate majority have refused to go along with any cover-up.

Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, Orrin Hatch of Utah, Richard Lugar of Indiana, Pat Roberts of Kansas and John Warner of Virginia have all been outspoken in their condemnation of the torture excesses. And they did so even before the latest, most far-reaching and worst of the allegations and reports surfaced. Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, lost no time in hauling Rumsfeld before it to testify.

The pattern of the latest wave of revelations is clear: They are coming from significant numbers of senior figures in both the U.S. military and intelligence services. They reflect the disgust and contempt widely felt in both communities at the excesses; and at long last, they are being listened to seriously by senior Republican, as well as Democratic, senators on Capitol Hill.

Rumsfeld and his team of top lieutenants have therefore now lost the confidence, trust and respect of both the Army and intelligence establishments. Key elements of the political establishment even of the ruling GOP now recognize this.

Yet Rumsfeld and his lieutenants remain determined to hang on to power, and so far President Bush has shown every sign of wanting to keep them there. The scandal, therefore, is far from over. The revelations will continue. The cost of the abuses to the American people and the U.S. national interest is already incalculable: And there is no end in sight.

Copyright © 2001-2004 United Press International



[Want to use this article? Click here for options!](#)

Copyright 2004 United Press International

Copyright © 2001-2004 United Press International. All rights reserved.

[Home](#) | [Products](#) | [Photos](#) | [About](#) | [Contact](#) | [Press](#) | [UPI Investigations](#) | [Terms](#)