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Torture "widespread" under U.S. custody: Amnesty

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By Richard Waddington

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GENEVA (Reuters) - Torture and inhumane treatment are "widespread" in U.S.-run detention centers in Afghanistan, Iraq, Cuba and elsewhere despite Washington's denials, Amnesty International said on Wednesday.

In a report for the United Nations' Committee against Torture, the London-based human rights group also alleged abuses within the U.S. domestic law enforcement system, including use of excessive force by police and degrading conditions of isolation for inmates in high security prisons.

"Evidence continues to emerge of widespread torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment of detainees held in U.S. custody," Amnesty said in its 47-page report.

It said that while Washington has sought to blame abuses that have recently come to light on "aberrant soldiers and lack of oversight", much ill-treatment stemmed from officially sanctioned interrogation procedures and techniques.

"The U.S. government is not only failing to take steps to eradicate torture, it is actually creating a climate in which torture and other ill-treatment can flourish," said Amnesty International USA Senior Deputy Director-General Curt Goering.

The U.N. committee, whose experts carry out periodic reviews of countries signatory to the U.N. Convention against Torture, is scheduled to begin consideration of the United States on Friday. The last U.S. review was in 2000.

It said in November it was seeking U.S. answers to questions including whether Washington operated secret detention centers abroad and whether President George W. Bush had the power to absolve anyone from criminal responsibility in torture cases.

The committee also wanted to know whether a December 2004 memorandum from the U.S. Attorney General's office, reserving torture for "extreme" acts of cruelty, was compatible with the global convention barring all forms of cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment. [Continued...](#)

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