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130 troops face action for abuse of prisoners

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San Diego - A total of 130 American troops have been punished or charged in cases involving the abuse of prisoners in Iraq, Afghanistan or Guantanamo Bay, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

More than 100 of the cases involve the Army, which has deployed the bulk of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and provides most of the guards at facilities where detainees are held. The others are Marines and Navy SEALs.

Recently released documents provided new details about the number of Marines who have been accused of abuse, and the Pentagon later gave the Associated Press a clearer picture by breaking down the numbers for the other branches of the military.

"The clear and distinct message is we investigate all allegations of detainee abuse," said Lt. Col. John Skinner, a Pentagon spokesman. "Misconduct is not tolerated."

A total of 26 Army soldiers were referred to courts-martial and 46 received nonjudicial or administrative punishment. Another 13 received letters of reprimand, and 17 others were dismissed from the military, Skinner said.

In addition, Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, who was in charge of U.S. prison guards accused of abusing Iraqis in the Abu Ghraib prison, was suspended in May from command of the 800th Military Police Brigade.

An Army spokeswoman said she could not provide a breakdown of how many cases of abuse were investigated.

A total of 18 Marines - all with the First Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Pendleton near San Diego - have been punished for abusing prisoners in Iraq over the past two years, said Marine Capt. Dan McSweeney.

A total of 27 Marine suspects were identified from 12 separate investigations into substantiated allegations of detainee abuse, he said.

Of those, 14 Marines were prosecuted in military courts-martial and four others received nonjudicial or administrative punishment. One Marine received official counseling in a case involving a prisoner who was given electric shocks at the Al Mahmudiya prison in April 2003.

"The Marine Corps takes allegations of detainee abuse seriously," McSweeney said.

A Marine sergeant and a major accused of abusing an Iraqi prisoner who died in June 2003 at a military jail in Iraq were convicted at courts-martial in September and November at Camp Pendleton.

Skinner said nine members of the elite Navy SEALs have been accused of abusing Iraqi detainees - two more than previously known.

Several members of SEAL Team Seven based in Coronado, Calif., have been accused of beating a hooded and handcuffed terror suspect who later died in Abu Ghraib in November 2003.

One SEAL has received nonjudicial punishment and charges are pending against the rest, Skinner said.