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3 at Navy prison suspended

Accusations of misconduct made

Charlie Savage
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WASHINGTON -- Three high-ranking officers were suspended from command yesterday at the US Navy's prison operation at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and are being investigated for undisclosed "allegations of personal misconduct," a military spokesman said.

The alleged misconduct did not involve detainees and is not related to a separate US Southern Command investigation into FBI allegations of abusive interrogation techniques at the prison for accused terrorists, Lieutenant Colonel Brad Blackner said. He did not disclose the specific allegations, saying he did not know what they were, but added that they could be "anything from writing a bad check to fraternization. It's a huge umbrella." Fraternization refers to personal relationships between officers and enlisted personnel, which is prohibited.

Blackner also declined to release the names or specific duties of the officers, though he said they are a colonel and two lieutenant colonels. An allegation against a fourth officer was referred to the Department of Army, he added. The officers remain at the Navy base on the southeastern coast of Cuba but will not continue in their prior duties at the prison while the investigation is underway.

Blackner said Brigadier General Jay Hood, the commander of the detention and interrogation operation, learned of the allegations through an anonymous tip in early February. He asked Southern Command to launch an investigation, which was led by a Marine colonel.

Hood announced the suspensions on the base yesterday and requested that the news media be notified.

Hood said, according to a statement, "Senior officers, especially those in command, are expected to set the example for the troops they lead."