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## Abuse in Secret

Editorial  
Washington Post  
March 5, 2005

THE ARMY has adopted more reforms in response to the prisoner abuse scandal and the continuing challenge of holding and interrogating thousands of detainees in Iraq and Afghanistan. A senior officer recently briefed journalists on what he described as a systematic restructuring of training and doctrine, including a revamping of interrogation policies and techniques and a new instructional program for soldiers assigned to prisons. This followed the release this year of plans for new facilities and procedures for handling detainees at the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, naval base. Details of the reforms are so far scanty, and none of the senior officers and civilian Pentagon officials responsible for the abuse scandal have yet been held accountable. Still, the uniformed military at least appears to be taking steps to prevent abuses like those of the Abu Ghraib prison in the future.

That still leaves the most serious and systematic violations of human rights standards by the Bush administration unaddressed. These have occurred -- and are still occurring -- in the secret global detention network maintained by the Central Intelligence Agency. In clandestine prisons in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and in detention facilities maintained by authoritarian allies such as Egypt, the CIA is holding dozens of detainees without any legal process, outside review, family notification or monitoring by the Red Cross and other human rights groups. In effect, these prisoners have "disappeared," like the domestic opponents of dictatorships that the State Department annually critiques in its human rights report. Many may have been tortured. As Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales confirmed in January, the administration has authorized CIA interrogators to subject these detainees to "cruel, inhumane and degrading" treatment banned by an international treaty that has been ratified by the United States.

Though the photographs from the Abu Ghraib prison have received the most attention, what is known of the CIA's secret prisons indicates that abuses there have been far more serious. The agency's inspector general is reviewing at least half a dozen cases of criminal abuse -- the number is not publicly known -- including at least four deaths. On Thursday The Post's Dana Priest reported the previously unpublicized case of an Afghan detainee held in a secret facility known as the Salt Pit. The detainee died in 2002 after a CIA officer allegedly ordered Afghan guards to strip him naked, chain him to a concrete floor and leave him overnight without protection from severe cold. The prisoner was buried in an unmarked grave, without notice to his family; the CIA officer was promoted. Not a single regular CIA employee has been charged in an abuse case, nor has the agency offered Congress or the public any accounting of its behavior.

Despite this shocking record, Congress has abdicated its responsibility to oversee the agency and prevent it from violating fundamental American standards of decency. The Republican chairmen of the Senate and House intelligence committees, Sen. Pat Roberts (Kan.) and Rep. Peter Hoekstra (Mich.), have been resisting Democratic requests for an investigation of the CIA's handling of its secret detainees. Such an investigation need not be a witch hunt or compromise the handling of senior al Qaeda prisoners. On the contrary, it should form the basis for belated action by Congress to set legal standards for the detention of all foreign prisoners by the United States in keeping with international treaties and human rights laws. In the absence of such standards, the Bush administration has allowed abuses that have tarnished the image of the United States around the world and impeded its ability to fight Islamic extremism. The time to correct the CIA's excesses is long overdue.