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Army setting limits on POW interrogation

JOHN J. LUMPKIN
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WASHINGTON -- The Army is setting specific limits on interrogation techniques for prisoners of war and describing actions that would violate international agreements on their treatment, officials said Wednesday.

Interrogators had been taught techniques and the law of warfare separately and then left to decide for themselves what would violate the Geneva Conventions, Thomas A. Gandy, the Army's director of human intelligence, counterintelligence, foreign disclosure and security, told reporters.

Maj. Gen. Donald Ryder, the provost marshal of the Army, described several other changes in doctrine, training and operations since the Abu Ghraib prison scandals in Iraq last year:

- Officials are emphasizing that guards should not be used in interrogation. Guards can provide some information about prisoners to military intelligence personnel, but they can't participate in interrogations or bring in dogs to assist interrogators.

- Reports by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which monitors prison conditions, will be more widely distributed in the military chain of command.

- CIA officers will have to follow military rules when in military-run prisons, registering detainees as they bring them in. This did not always happen in Iraq, leading to a number of "ghost detainees" who were held off the books.

- The Army is restructuring its military police units, assembling a brigade of soldiers who specialize in running and guarding prisons, particularly in combat zones. That work will be done by 2008.

"The Army has taken action," Ryder said of efforts to reform the military prison system. "This is an ongoing, living process."

In Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. forces have screened at least 65,000 potential detainees and kept 30,000 of them for some period of time. About 550 are at the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where the Bush administration has proposed in an emergency spending measure to spend \$41.8 million for a permanent prison.

Army investigators have looked into 308 allegations of detainee abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan and at Guantanamo. Of those, 107 cases are open.

One case still being investigated involves an elderly Iraqi woman who alleges she was abducted, robbed and sexually assaulted by U.S. or other coalition soldiers in August 2003, Army spokesman Col. Joseph Curtin said Wednesday.

The woman reported the incident in March 2004. Investigators could find no evidence she was assaulted and have no suspects, Curtin said, but the case remains open.