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U.S. Tortured Detainees at 'Dark Prison' in Afghanistan:

Cheney denies abuse, but report describes sleep denial, chaining

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KABUL, Afghanistan -- The United States operated a secret prison in Afghanistan as recently as last year, torturing detainees with sleep deprivation, chaining them to the walls and forcing them to listen to loud music in total darkness for days, a human rights group alleged Monday.

The prison was run near Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, New York- based Human Rights Watch said in a report based on the accounts of several detainees at the U.S. prison for suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay.

CIA officials have not commented on various allegations of torture, but Vice President Dick Cheney on Sunday denied that the United States engaged in torture.

"I can say that we, in fact, are consistent with the commitments of the United States that we don't engage in torture, and we don't," Cheney said in an interview to be broadcast today on ABC News "Nightline." Cheney was not responding directly to the Human Rights Watch report.

According to the report by the rights group, the detainees were kept in total darkness -- they called the facility "Dark Prison" -- and were tortured and mistreated by American and Afghan guards in civilian clothes, an indication the facility may have been operated by the CIA.

"They were chained to walls, deprived of food and drinking water, and kept in total darkness with loud rap, heavy metal music, or other sounds blared for weeks at a time," the report said.

"Some detainees said they were shackled in a manner that made it impossible to lie down or sleep, with restraints that caused their hands and wrists to swell up or bruise."

Human Rights Watch did not speak with the detainees directly because the United States has not allowed rights organizations to visit detainees at Guantanamo or other overseas detention sites.

Instead, the detainees' accounts were given to their lawyers, who passed them on to the rights group. The group said the allegations were credible enough to warrant an official investigation.

"We're not talking about torture in the abstract, but the real thing," said John Sifton, terrorism and counterterrorism researcher at Human Rights Watch.

The report said Benyam Mohammad, an Ethiopian-born Guantanamo detainee who grew up in Britain, claimed he was held at the facility in 2004.

"It was pitch black, no lights on in the rooms for most of the time," he was quoted as telling his lawyer. "They hung me up. I was allowed a few hours of sleep on the second day, then hung up again, this time for two days."

Mohammad went on to say that he was forced to listen to Eminem and Dr. Dre for 20 days before the music was replaced by "horrible ghost laughter and Halloween sounds."