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Documents Reveal Defiance by Guantanamo's Detainees

Disciplinary records also show guards' retaliation

BEN FOX
Associated Press
July 1, 2005

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO - The prisoners banged on their cells to protest the heat at Guantanamo Bay. They doused guards with whatever liquid was handy — from spit to urine. Sometimes they struck their jailers, one swinging a steel chair at a military police officer.

And the American MPs at times retaliated with force — punches, pepper spray and a splash of cleaning fluid in the face, according to documents obtained by the Associated Press that detail military investigations and eyewitness accounts of alleged abuse.

Military authorities have previously disclosed some incidents of guard retaliation, which resulted in mostly minor disciplinary proceedings. What emerges from 278 pages of the newly released documents is the degree of defiance by the terrorism suspects at Guantanamo.

Some prisoners at the U.S. base in eastern Cuba have gone on the attack, as in April 2003 when a detainee got out of his cell during a search for contraband food and knocked out a guard's tooth with a punch to the mouth and bit him before he was subdued by MPs. One soldier delivered two blows to the inmate's head with a handheld radio, the documents show.

"Several guards were trying to hold down the detainee who was putting up heavy resistance," recounted a translator who saw the incident. "The detainee was covered in blood as were some of the guards."

The soldier who struck the inmate, and was dropped in rank to private first class as a result, described it as a close call. "The detainee was fighting as if he really wanted to hurt us ... We all saved each other's lives in my opinion," he wrote.

The documents, obtained under a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed by AP, are far from a comprehensive look at Guantanamo and do not provide full details about each incident.

The internal investigative reports do, however, provide a snapshot of life at Guantanamo, depicting a tense, hostile and sometimes chaotic place.

In one of the more serious incidents described in the documents, detainees told guards that an MP threw a cleaning liquid in the eyes of a prisoner one night in January 2004. In a written statement, another soldier said he came in immediately afterward to find what smelled like cleaning liquid dripping from the cell.

"The detainee could be seen rubbing his eyes intensely and moaning in pain," he said.