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Ex-Abu Ghraib Warden: Boss Urged Dog Use

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FORT MEADE, Md. -- The use of dogs during interrogations at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq was recommended by the commander of the Guantanamo Bay detention center during a visit in 2003, the former warden of Abu Ghraib said.

"We understood that he was sent over by the secretary of defense," Maj. David Dinenna testified Wednesday during a hearing for two Army dog handlers accused of prisoner abuse.

Dinenna also testified that teams of trainers were sent to Abu Ghraib from Guantanamo Bay to try to incorporate certain interrogation techniques in Iraq.

The defense maintains the use of unmuzzled dogs to intimidate Abu Ghraib inmates was sanctioned high up in the chain of command and was not just a game played by two rogue soldiers, as the government claims.

"They did what they were instructed to do," defense attorney Harvey J. Volzer said.

Prosecutors say the two soldiers used their dogs in a competition to frighten prisoners into urinating on themselves in December 2003 and January 2004.

Dinenna's testimony came at the end of a two-day preliminary hearing to determine whether the dog handlers, Sgts. Santos A. Cardona and Michael J. Smith, should face a court-martial. The investigating officer, Maj. Glenn Simpkins, will take up to two weeks to consider the evidence and make a recommendation.

Investigations into detainee abuse have led to charges against several soldiers at the prison but have found no fault with high-level leaders such as Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, although critics charge the military has been unable to properly investigate its top-level leadership.

The then-commander of the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, was Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller, who later went to Iraq to oversee detainee operations and is now in a Pentagon position unrelated to prisons.

One interrogator, Staff Sgt. Christopher S. Aston, testified that the only clear instruction about how dogs were to be used during interrogations at Abu Ghraib came from Col. Thomas M. Pappas, the highest-ranking military intelligence officer at the prison. Pappas said dogs could be used, but only if they were muzzled, Aston said.

Pappas was reprimanded and fined in May for failing to get approval from his commander, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, before approving limited use of dogs.

Cardona, 31, of Fullerton, Calif., and Smith, 24, of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., are charged with cruelty and maltreatment, conspiracy to maltreat detainees, aggravated assault, dereliction of duty and making false official statements.

Cardona faces a maximum 16 1/2 years in prison if convicted on all nine counts against him. Smith, who also is charged with committing an indecent act, could be imprisoned for 29 1/2 years if convicted on 14 counts.