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Sen. Durbin Stands by Guantanamo Remarks

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Associated Press
June 15, 2005

CHICAGO -- Sen. Dick Durbin refused to apologize Wednesday for comments he made on the Senate floor comparing the actions of American soldiers at Guantanamo Bay to Nazis, Soviet gulags and a "mad regime" like Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot's in Cambodia.

Durbin's comments created a buzz on the Internet Wednesday, fueled by sound bites of his speech on radio talk shows. By Wednesday afternoon, Illinois Republican Party Chairman Andy McKenna asked Durbin to apologize.

"Senator Durbin's comments come as a great disservice to our military personnel in Guantanamo," McKenna said in a statement. "They are also a great disservice to all U.S. soldiers and veterans who have fought, and continue to fight, to overcome evil regimes and spread democracy around the world."

Durbin did not plan to apologize for the comments, spokesman Joe Shoemaker said.

"This administration should apologize to the American people for abandoning the Geneva Conventions and authorizing torture techniques that put our troops at risk and make Americans less secure," Durbin said in a statement Wednesday evening.

During a speech Tuesday, the Senate's No. 2 Democrat quoted from an FBI agent's report describing detainees at the Naval base in Guantanamo Bay as being chained to the floor without food or water in extreme temperatures.

"If I read this to you and did not tell you that it was an FBI agent describing what Americans had done to prisoners in their control, you would most certainly believe this must have been done by Nazis, Soviets in their gulags, or some mad regime _ Pol Pot or others _ that had no concern for human beings," Durbin said.

Critics _ mostly human-rights groups and Democrats _ have long accused the administration of unjustly detaining suspects at the prison camp in Guantanamo.

The Bush administration calls the Guantanamo prisoners "enemy combatants" who are entitled to fewer legal protections than those afforded to prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions.