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Abu Ghraib Learned From Guantanamo

Prison in Iraq imported interrogation methods, former warden testifies

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Baltimore Sun
July 28, 2005

A former warden of Abu Ghraib prison told a hushed courtroom yesterday that interrogation techniques used at Guantanamo Bay were imported to the prison in Iraq. His testimony was a defense effort to tie higher-ups to allegations of prisoner abuse by two dog handlers who could face courts-martial.

Maj. David Dinenna testified at a hearing at Fort Meade yesterday that Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, the Guantanamo commander, talked in a September 2003 trip about how effective dogs could be at the Abu Ghraib compound outside Baghdad.

"We understood that he was sent over by the secretary of defense," said Dinenna, testifying by telephone on the second and final day of an Article 32 hearing - the Army equivalent of a grand jury proceeding - for Army dog handlers Sgts. Santos A. Cardona and Michael J. Smith.

Charges against the two include mistreatment of prisoners and dereliction of duty.

On Tuesday, a reservist who has been convicted of prisoner abuse testified that Cardona and Smith set dogs on prisoners at Abu Ghraib, one of whom was bitten badly enough to require stitches.

Lawyers for the dog handlers say the use of snarling dogs to terrify detainees was sanctioned by higher officials in a crowded prison that was short on resources and where personnel were under stress. They said their clients were acting appropriately and following orders, and they are seeking dismissal of the criminal charges.

In his testimony yesterday, Dinenna said training teams were sent to Abu Ghraib to "take these interrogation techniques, other techniques they were using in Guantanamo and try to incorporate them in Iraq."

Dinenna described a meeting with Miller that included Col. Thomas M. Pappas, then head of the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade at Abu Ghraib and since reprimanded for his role in the scandal; and Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, since demoted, whose Army Reserve unit was in charge of the prison when detainees were mistreated.

Miller discussed changes "to reflect more of Guantanamo Bay," Dinenna said. He said Miller "couldn't understand why we didn't have dogs there." The two Army dog handlers facing charges arrived within weeks, then three more arrived from the Navy.

Asked for comment on claims by defense attorneys that the dog handlers' actions had been sanctioned by higher-ups, a Defense Department spokesman said he would not discuss legal proceedings.

A report summary released this year by the Navy inspector general said Miller led a team of intelligence and interrogation experts that offered advice after finding that Abu Ghraib lacked interrogation policies.

The resulting policy by Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top Army general in Iraq at the time of the abuses, was considered "overly aggressive," according to the U.S. Central Command staff judge advocate, and another policy was in effect by mid-October 2003. Abusive practices were not sanctioned in either version, the report said.

Military prosecutors have depicted Smith and Cardona as acting on their own, contending that the two held contests to see who could scare more detainees into urinating on themselves and that they wrongly let their dogs bite detainees.

Prosecutors called eight witnesses over two days to detail allegations of abuse from late 2003 to January 2004.

Smith, 24, of Florida, who is with the 42nd Military Police Detachment at Fort Bragg, N.C., faces up to 29 1/2 years in a military prison if convicted at a court-martial of all abuse charges. Cardona, 31, of California, who is with the 523rd Military Police Detachment at Fort Riley, Kan., faces up to 16 1/2 years if convicted.

Their hearing, consolidated by the military because the cases are closely linked, was held at Fort Meade in part because of its large courtroom and other facilities, officials said.

The investigating officer, Maj. Glenn Simpkins of Fort Myer in Arlington, Va., will make recommendations on whether charges should be dropped, changed or go to court-martial. A decision by higher-ranking officers is expected within a few weeks.