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## Passing the prison abuse buck

Derrick Z. Jackson (Op-Ed)  
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AMERICA AGAIN parsed the treatment of prisoners from 9/11 and Iraq. A military investigation of alleged abuses at Guantanamo Bay found that, yes, some prisoners were physically and mentally roughed up under techniques approved by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. The most notable detainee was Mohamed Qahtani, the alleged "20th hijacker" of 9/11.

Yes, the military admits, Qahtani was led around on a dog leash and forced to do dog tricks. Yes, he was forced to stand naked in front of female soldiers, wear a bra, and wear a woman's thong panties on his head. Yes, he was forced to dance with a male interrogator. Yes, he was told he was a homosexual and that his mother and sister were whores. Yes, some other prisoners were treated in a similar manner.

Yes, the military admits that this was "abusive and degrading."

But, no, the military said it was not torture. Lieutenant General Randall Schmidt told the Senate Armed Services Committee Wednesday that, overall, "detention and interrogation operations were safe, secure, and humane."

Once again, the jobs of Rumsfeld and his superior military officers were safe and secure, even though many of these "humane" operations were shipped over to the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, where photographs of degrading abuse and a prisoner on a leash caused an international scandal.

To this day, only grunts have gone to jail. The "face" of abuse became a female reservist, Lynndie England. The only senior military officer to be demoted was Janis Karpinski.

Rumsfeld is still defense secretary, Alberto Gonzales, who mused that the Geneva Conventions are quaint and obsolete, is the attorney general and a much-rumored possibility for the Supreme Court. The former commander in Iraq, Ricardo Sanchez, is under consideration for promotion by Rumsfeld to four-star general.

Sanchez's deputy commander, Major General Walter Wodjakowski, was promoted last month to run the Army's infantry training school at Fort Benning. The former top military lawyer in Baghdad, Colonel Marc Warren, has been nominated to be a brigadier general. Major General Barbara Fast, Sanchez's top intelligence official, was promoted to the command of the Army intelligence center in Arizona. All of the military officers were exonerated by past investigations.

The very safety that these "investigations" provided Rumsfeld and his officers surely undermine security for the rest of us. The Iraq invasion had already caused a massive loss of support for our foreign policy in the Arab world. A Zogby International poll last year found that support for the invasion in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates ranged between 1 and 4 percent. Overall support for President Bush's "war on terror" was no higher than 21 percent in any of those countries.

Yesterday, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press released a global attitudes survey that found a dramatic drop in general support for suicide bombings in defense of Islam. But even with that decline, support remains at disconcerting levels for such bombings in Iraq against Americans and other Westerners. Support is at 24 percent in Turkey, 26 percent in

Indonesia, 29 percent in Pakistan, 49 percent in both Lebanon and Jordan, and 56 percent in Morocco.

Some Muslim-majority countries such as Morocco and Indonesia have seen a sharp drop in people who say they have some or a lot of confidence in Al Qaeda's leader, Osama bin Laden. But confidence in bin Laden has actually increased in Pakistan from 45 to 51 percent and in Jordan from 55 to 60 percent. While a majority of women in Pakistan have a dim view of bin Laden, 65 percent of men say they place some or a lot of confidence in him.

The Pew survey found a conundrum. A majority of Muslims in countries like Morocco, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Turkey see Islamic extremism as being a threat to their countries. But in some countries, such as Lebanon and Jordan, a plurality of people blamed US policies and influence for that extremism. In last year's Zogby poll of Arab attitudes, the most prominent response to an open-ended question of what was the first thing someone thought of when they hear the word "America" was: "unfair foreign policy."

Schmidt, to his minor credit, found the abuses at Guantanamo bad enough to recommend a reprimand for its commander, Major General Geoffrey Miller. That recommendation was overruled by General Bantz Craddock of the US Southern Command. Craddock said Miller broke no laws. Once again, no one bears responsibility for mistreatment of prisoners. This latest parsing is sure to add more poison to our relations in the Arab world.