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## **Detainees Accuse Female Interrogators**

Pentagon Inquiry Is Said to Confirm Muslims' Accounts of Sexual Tactics at Guantanamo

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Female interrogators repeatedly used sexually suggestive tactics to try to humiliate and pry information from devout Muslim men held at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, according to a military investigation not yet public and newly declassified accounts from detainees.

The prisoners have told their lawyers, who compiled the accounts, that female interrogators regularly violated Muslim taboos about sex and contact with women. The women rubbed their bodies against the men, wore skimpy clothes in front of them, made sexually explicit remarks and touched them provocatively, at least eight detainees said in documents or through their attorneys.

A wide-ranging Pentagon investigation, which has not yet been released, generally confirms the detainees' allegations, according to a senior Defense Department official familiar with the report. While isolated accounts of such tactics have emerged in recent weeks, the new allegations and the findings of the Pentagon investigation indicate that sexually oriented tactics may have been part of the fabric of Guantanamo interrogations, especially in 2003.

The inquiry uncovered numerous instances in which female interrogators, using dye, pretended to spread menstrual blood on Muslim men, the official said. Separately, in court papers and public statements, three detainees say that women smeared them with blood.

The military investigation of U.S. detention and interrogation practices worldwide, led by Vice Adm. Albert T. Church III, confirmed one case in which an Army interrogator took off her uniform top and paraded around in a tight T-shirt to make a Guantanamo detainee uncomfortable, and other cases in which interrogators touched the detainees suggestively, the senior Pentagon official said.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the report has not yet been made public, said the fake blood was used on Muslim men before they intended to pray, because some Muslims believe that "if a woman touches him prior to prayer, then he's dirty and can't pray." Muslim men also believe that contact with women other than their wives diminishes religious purity.

Defense Department officials said they have reprimanded two female interrogators for such tactics. It is unclear whether military personnel, employees of other agencies or private contractors were involved.

The attorney interviews of detainees are the result of a Supreme Court decision last summer that gave the captives access to lawyers and the opportunity to challenge their incarceration in U.S. courts.

In previous documents, detainees have complained of physical abuse, including routine beatings, painful shackling, and exposure to extremes of hot and cold. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld insisted then that detainees were treated "humanely," and Pentagon officials said terrorists were trained to fabricate torture allegations.

Some of the accounts resemble the sexual aspects of the humiliation of Iraqi prisoners at the U.S. prison at Abu Ghraib. Photographs that became public last year showed a servicewoman there holding naked prisoners on a leash and posing next to a pile of naked prisoners.

Pentagon officials said yesterday that wearing skimpy clothing or engaging in provocative touching and banter would be inappropriate interrogation techniques.

"I don't see that as being authorized by secretary of defense's approved interrogation techniques for Guantanamo," said Col. David McWilliams, a spokesman for the U.S. Southern Command in Miami, which oversees operations at Guantanamo Bay.

McWilliams said it is premature to comment on whether the detainee allegations are credible until a second military investigation that focuses on Guantanamo Bay abuse allegations is complete. The inquiry, which began in early January after the release of documents in which FBI agents said they witnessed abuse, is scheduled to be completed this month.

"That's exactly why we're doing an investigation," McWilliams said. "We're going to establish the facts and the truth."

Church's report found that interrogators used sexually oriented tactics and harassment to shock or offend Muslim prisoners, the senior Pentagon official said. The official said that the military would not condone "sexual activity" during interrogation, but that good interrogators "take initiative and are a little creative."

"They are trying to find the key that will get someone to talk to them. Using things that are culturally repulsive is okay as long as it doesn't extend to something prohibited by the Geneva Conventions."

Attorneys for detainees scoffed at the Pentagon's insistence that the military can fairly investigate its own personnel. They noted that the Defense Department last fall initially dismissed torture allegations, insisting that detainees were trained at terrorist camps to lodge false claims.

Even detainee lawyers doubted that interrogators would spread menstrual blood on prisoners when a recently released British detainee first made the allegation in early 2004. A month ago, a Pentagon spokesman confirmed it had verbally reprimanded one female interrogator who, in early 2003, had smeared red dye from a marker on a detainee's shirt and told him it was blood.

In a yet-to-be-published book, former Army translator Erik Saar said he saw a female interrogator smear red dye on a Saudi man's face, telling him it was blood. Saar's account was first reported by the Associated Press last month. And Mamdouh Habib, an Australian man released from Guantanamo Bay last month, said he was strapped down while a woman told him she was "menstruating" on his face.

One lawyer, Marc Falkoff, said in an interview that when a Yemeni client told him a few weeks ago about an incident involving menstrual blood, "I almost didn't even write it down." He said: "It seemed crazy, like something out of a horror movie or a John Waters film. Now it doesn't seem ludicrous at all."

Some of the newly declassified accounts of detainees evoke scenes from a rock music video. German detainee Murat Kurnaz told his lawyer that three women in lacy bras and panties strutted into the interrogation room where he was sitting in chains. They cooed about how attractive he was and suggested "they could have some fun," he said.

When Kurnaz averted his eyes, he said, one woman sat on his lap, another rubbed her breasts against his back and massaged his chest and a third squatted near his crotch. He head-butted

the woman behind him, he said, knocking her off him. All three ran out and a team of soldiers stormed in and beat him, he said.

Detainee lawyers likened the tactics to Nazis shaving the beards of orthodox Jews or artists dunking a crucifix in urine to shock Christians. "They're exploiting religious beliefs to break them down, to destroy them," said Michael Ratner of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which represents several dozen detainees. "What they're doing, it reminds me of a pornographic Web site -- it's like the fantasy of all these S&M clubs."

Falkoff said some of his clients have also been threatened with rape by male interrogators.

One soldier told another detainee, Muktar Warafi, that he had to start telling the truth or he would be raped, according to Falkoff's notes of the interview. When he left the room, another person immediately came into the room and told Warafi: "That interrogator is new and doesn't know the rules. We apologize on his behalf. Now let's talk."

Yasein Esmail, a Yemeni detainee, said he had been interrogated more than 100 times since being "kidnapped" in a marketplace in Kabul, Afghanistan, and brought to Guantanamo Bay. He recounted to his lawyer that when he refused to talk in one interview, a female soldier entered wearing a tight T-shirt.

"Why aren't you married?" she reportedly asked Esmail. "You are a young man and have needs. What do you like?"

Esmail said "she bent down with her breasts on the table and her legs almost touching" him. "Are you going to talk," she asked, "or are we going to do this for six hours?"