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Lawyers: US Military Eroding Guantanamo Inmates Trust-NYT

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NEW YORK (Dow Jones)--The U.S. military at the Guantanamo detention center in Cuba has reportedly been trying to undermine inmate trust in their defense lawyers, the New York Times reported Tuesday.

According to the lawyers, a military officer told one detainee not to trust his lawyers because they are Jewish, and another detainee saw a man masquerading as a civilian defense lawyer later appear in uniform.

"The government should not be trying to come between these people and their lawyers," one of the lawyers, Thomas Wilner, said in an interview, the Times reported. "And I'm especially offended that they tried to use the fact that I'm Jewish to do it."

Wilner and another lawyer, Marc Falkoff, whose firm represents several Yemenis at Guantanamo, also relate detainees' accounts of people claiming to be lawyers and then revealing the ruse in order to sow further distrust, the Times reported.

Some of Falkoff's clients told him a man wearing civilian clothes and said he was a lawyer had conferred several times with detainees. The man later appeared at the detention center in uniform, leading the inmates to distrust anyone claiming to be a lawyer, Falkoff said, the Times reported.

Wilner said some of his clients reported a similar account. "They couldn't have been their lawyers," said Wilner, pointing out that he and his associates are the only ones authorized by the detainees' families to represent them.

The Pentagon has always been against letting Guantanamo detainees meet with lawyers and had tried to prevent it before a federal court ordered them to allow the meetings.

However, a military spokesman denied the defense lawyers' allegations.

"We are taking no action to interfere with the attorney-client relationship," Lt. Col. Brad K. Blackner, spokesman for the joint task force that runs the detention center, said in a statement, the Times reported.