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## **Lawyers for Guantanamo detainees describe abuses**

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WASHINGTON - Twelve Kuwaitis held for about three years at the detention center at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have been physically and psychologically abused, their lawyers charged Wednesday after their first visit with the detainees.

The detainees were "all very thin, almost emaciated," and most were being held in isolation, with 45 minutes of exercise a week, no reading material except the Quran and no medical treatment, said Tom Wilner, who visited his clients last week.

Some detainees complained of religious humiliation, saying guards had defaced their copies of the Quran and, in one case, threw it in a toilet, said Kristine Huskey, who interviewed clients in late December.

Other detainees claimed pills were found in their food and that people came to their cells claiming to be their lawyers to gain information.

"All have been physically abused, and, however you define the term, the treatment of these men crossed the line," Wilner said. "There was torture, make no mistake about it."

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Flex Plexico said Wednesday that guards went "to great lengths to accommodate the dietary needs" of the 500-plus detainees and "expert medical attention" was provided at Guantanamo, where the Bush administration has established a temporary detention center for international terrorism suspects.

Plexico said U.S. troops on the base ate some of the same food, and that the average detainee had gained 13 pounds since arriving at Guantanamo.

The Defense Department "takes all allegations of abuse very seriously and would investigate any such allegation," he added.

After a recent series of such reports, the government launched two investigations of mistreatment at Guantanamo, including one by the Justice Department's inspector general.

Last month the government was forced to release memos that showed FBI agents complaining to supervisors that they'd witnessed the abuse of detainees. Some prisoners were chained hand and foot to the floor, with no food or water, and left in their own urine and feces for 18 or more hours in very hot or very cold cells, the agents' memos said.

Wilner said that because his conversations with detainees were classified, he couldn't relay specific complaints from them by name, but that some of the mistreatment mirrored reports in the FBI memos.

He said he was seeking better treatment for the detainees from the military, and would ask a judge to intervene if that didn't work.

"I have met murderers in prison," Wilner said. "Compared to these men (in Guantanamo), Charles Manson is living in a palace."

The 12 Kuwaitis were captured in Pakistan during the Afghanistan war. Their advocates say they weren't involved with al-Qaida terrorists, but U.S. agents, in declassified summaries of the Kuwaitis' cases, charge that some went through terrorist training camps and were fighting with the hard-line Taliban movement that was sheltering Osama bin Laden.

The Kuwaitis are among 74 detainees who've filed habeas corpus petitions in federal court in Washington, challenging their captivity. The Supreme Court ruled in June that federal courts had jurisdiction over Guantanamo.

Two federal judges in Washington are weighing a motion from the Bush administration to dismiss the petitions. Justice Department officials argue that panels that the military set up to review the detainees' cases at Guantanamo meet the Supreme Court's standards.