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Report Details Discipline for Guantanamo Abuses

The first accounting of the military's handling of allegations also tallies Iraq, Afghanistan cases.

Richard A. Serrano
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WASHINGTON — The State Department said Friday that 11 soldiers at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have been punished for such abuses as throwing water and cleaning fluid on prisoners and inappropriately touching one detainee and sitting on his lap.

Most of the soldiers received reprimands or other minor punishments and only one, a military policeman, was court-martialed. The guard, accused of improperly using pepper spray on a detainee, was acquitted of all charges.

The State Department report represents the first accounting of how the U.S. military has handled several recent allegations of abuse at Guantanamo Bay made by released prisoners and in reports from FBI agents. The report, prepared for the United Nations Committee Against Torture, also tallies previously known torture and abuse allegations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

At Guantanamo Bay on April 17, 2003, a female interrogator "inappropriately touched a detainee by running her fingers through the detainee's hair, and made sexually suggestive comments and body movements, including sitting on the detainee's lap during an interrogation," the report said. The interrogator received a written admonishment and additional training.

A second female interrogator, on an unknown date, assaulted a prisoner after he spit on her. She wiped red dye from a red magic marker on his shirt and told him the stain was blood. For that she was verbally reprimanded. Another interrogator was reprimanded for duct-taping a prisoner's mouth shut after he became "extremely disruptive during an interrogation" in October 2002.

A guard at Guantanamo was demoted from specialist to private first class and put on restriction for seven days for trying to hose down a prisoner who threw "an unidentified, foul-smelling liquid on the MP." Another guard, who had been struck in the face and lost a tooth on April 10, 2003, retaliated by hitting the prisoner with a hand-held radio, according to the report. The guard was given 45 days extra duty and demoted from specialist to PFC.

On March 23, 2003, a guard sprayed a prisoner with pepper spray after the detainee threw an unidentified liquid on the guard. The guard declined to accept nonjudicial punishment and was subsequently tried by special court-martial, in which he was acquitted.

And on Feb. 15, 2004, a barber gave two detainees "unusual haircuts, including an inverse Mohawk," to frustrate them. The barber and his company commander were counseled as a result of the incident.

The report alleged that of 234 prisoners released from Guantanamo Bay, 12 "have returned to terrorism" after going home. One killed an Afghan judge leaving a mosque, the report said. Two others were killed in combat in Afghanistan.

The report also cited the half-dozen courts-martial and several dozen administrative punishments stemming from the scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, where many prisoners were abused and sexually humiliated.

"These incidents ... which to date could implicate 54 military personnel, involved blatant violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the law of war. The United States deeply regrets these abuses," the report said.

As of March 1, according to the report, 190 incidents of abuse in Iraq had been substantiated. Thirty courts-martial were convened, and various administrative punishments were imposed.

In Afghanistan, 22 of 23 allegations of serious abuse have been corroborated. Seven more investigations are still open. As of March 1, two courts-martial had been held, 10 nonjudicial punishments handed down and two reprimands given to soldiers.

The report cited two specific cases. In one, two soldiers were charged in the beating deaths of two Afghans at the Bagram detention facility.

The second case involves allegations from an Afghan police officer who complained that he was abused in Gardez and Bagram.