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Guantánamo's Legacy

HOLD GENERAL TO ACCOUNT FOR ABUSIVE TACTICS

Editorial

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The military's own probe of the Guantánamo Bay prison found that captives there haven't actually been tortured -- but they have been abused and humiliated plenty. Moreover, the abuse and humiliation at Guantánamo, authorized by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, eerily parallel tactics later used in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Despite the findings, the military's top brass still manages to escape blame. That has to change.

Investigators recommended that a major-general be admonished for failing to supervise an "abusive and degrading" interrogation, but the suggestion was rejected. The interrogation involved Mohamed al Kahtani, a suspected Saudi terrorist who ultimately "confessed" that he was the 20th hijacker missing on 9/11, according to congressional testimony. He did so after interrogators stripped him naked in front of female interrogators, led him around on a leash, forced him to do dog tricks, used dogs to intimidate him and ordered to him to dance with a male interrogator, among other things.

Although the tactics are authorized, investigators found them abusive and degrading "in the context of 48 days of intense and long interrogations." Their sensible recommendation: Hold accountable Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, chief of the Guantánamo facility at the time. Gen. Miller later went to Iraq to help set up the Abu Ghraib prison and subsequently sent special teams of Guantánamo interrogators there as trainers and consultants. Within weeks, Abu Ghraib detainees were being subjected to similar abuses. Nonetheless, Southcom chief Gen. Bantz J. Craddock declined the disciplinary recommendation, saying that Gen. Miller had violated no law or policy.

In a Senate hearing last week, military lawyers said the Guantánamo tactics violate the Geneva Conventions' ban on torture. They also violate U.S. principles of fairness and justice.