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Army Exonerates General:

An internal Army investigation concluded that Guantanamo's commander of prison operations did not know that interrogators turned a dog on a captive to extract

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Mar. 20--As commander of prison operations at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Army Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller would boast that he had a hand in all the operations -- from looking over the shoulders of interrogators at work to oversight of sports activities for soldiers guarding terror suspects.

Not so, says Time magazine in a report published this morning that exonerates the commander from responsibility from one of the crudest cases of abuse at the Pentagon's showcase prison in southeast Cuba.

An Army investigation obtained by the magazine found that Miller had no knowledge that interrogators unleashed an array of abuse and humiliation on a Saudi captive considered by some to have been a candidate for the 20th hijacker position in the Sept. 11 attacks.

'Miller was unaware a canine had been used to intimidate alleged '20th hijacker' Mohammed al Qahtani, or that al Qahtani was forced to don women's underwear and perform dog tricks -- even though Miller was intimately involved in planning [the] interrogation,' Time reports, quoting a report by the Army Inspector General, Lt. Gen. Stanley Green.

U.S. officials turned Qahtani away from entering the United States at Orlando International Airport in August 2001, but later captured him in south Asia and sent him to Guantanamo. Another suspected 20th hijacker, Frenchman Zacarias Moussaoui, was already in U.S. custody.

Qahtani's attorney says he was subjected to such a cruel stream of abusive interrogation that he gave a false confession, which he now recants.

Time earlier reprinted a portion of Qahtani's interrogation log, in which U.S. interrogators describe how they ratcheted up techniques on their captive during 50 days starting in November 2002 to extract the confession -- sleep deprivation, leaving him strapped to an intravenous drip without bathroom breaks and having him strip naked.

Qahtani is now suing the U.S. government for his freedom in a habeas corpus petition filed in U.S. District Court late last year, before Congress moved to strip Guantanamo captives of habeas recourse.

On the Army side, Time magazine says Green's internal investigation "even lavishes praise on Miller," particularly his energy and leadership. He was the fourth commander of the prison camp after a Marine general set it up and was succeeded by two reserve Army generals.

Miller is the prison commander who introduced the Guantanamo ritual of saluting officers with the slogan, "Honor Bound" -- and had officers respond, "Defend Freedom," with a salute.

Pentagon officials also dispatched him to Iraq to oversee prison operations there following a consulting visit in which he reportedly planned to "Gitmo-ize" Abu Ghraib -- the prison that once housed Saddam Hussein's torture chambers. Miller, most recently posted at the Pentagon as a special assistant to the deputy chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is expected to soon retire

from service. Rather than testify at the military trial of a dog handler accused of abusing prisoners at Abu Ghraib, Miller chose to invoke the military equivalent of his Fifth Amendment rights.

Pleading the Fifth is a fundamental American right, but career Army officers say it also ends a general officer's ambitions for advancement.