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Interrogator disciplined over techniques now teaching soldiers

JAMES GORDON MEEK
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WASHINGTON - (KRT) - An ex-Army interrogator punished for sexually humiliating detainees at the Guantanamo prison is now teaching soldiers interrogation techniques, the New York Daily News has learned.

Former Staff Sgt. Jeannette Arocho-Burkart, 37, is an instructor at the Army Intelligence School in Fort Huachuca, Ariz., despite being reprimanded in 2003 for her sexually taunting tactics that included smearing fake menstrual blood on terror suspects, according to four sources who knew her there.

"She did get in trouble," confirmed one former colleague at Gitmo. "Huachuca could probably do better."

The source said that Arocho-Burkart was a "competent" interrogator, but "she fudged the line to an uncomfortable level."

"It wasn't torture, but touching the detainee inappropriately to humiliate him," the source said.

Besides wearing skimpy clothing to make Muslim men uncomfortable during questioning, Arocho-Burkart allegedly smeared red ink on a detainee's face, saying it was her menstrual blood - an act that got her punished.

Last week, Vice Adm. Albert Church, in a Pentagon report that cited only three cases of "substantiated" abuse at Gitmo, wrote that "two female interrogators ... touched and spoke to detainees in a sexually suggestive manner ... to incur stress based on the detainees' religious beliefs."

"Those reprimands were verbal, strong and immediate, and dealt with the situation," said another source who knew Arocho-Burkart at the prison camp.

Arocho-Burkart, raised in Mount Holly, N.J., and Puerto Rico, couldn't be reached for comment.

She left the Army and spent last year as a contractor with the Phoenix Consulting Group, where she was handpicked by the Defense Intelligence Agency to teach "strategic debriefing," or eliciting information from willing sources.

Last month, she left the agency and Phoenix. She now teaches a interrogation course at the Army school under contract with defense contractor Anteon Corp., officials said.

Officials at Huachuca and Phoenix's chairman, John Nolan, said they weren't aware until recently that Arocho-Burkart was reprimanded for detainee abuse.

Before she quit the agency job, Arocho-Burkart was quizzed about the allegations and denied them, a military official said.

Officials checked with Guantanamo before hiring Arocho-Burkart, but weren't told of the reprimand. Had they learned of it, "We wouldn't have hired her," the official said. Nolan added,

"We're not interested in (hiring) somebody who colors outside the lines."