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## **Passing the Buck: FBI memos detail new aspects of prisoner abuse**

Editorial  
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New revelations about alleged mistreatment of detainees in Iraq and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, make one wonder just what's going on at the Pentagon.

According to FBI memos released as part of an American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit against the government, military interrogators beat, choked and placed lit cigarettes in the ears of detainees in Iraq. According to one memo, military personnel posed as FBI agents during the interrogations in Cuba.

That's right: Military personnel apparently pretended to be FBI agents and used that cover to do in the name of the FBI what they weren't willing to do in the name of the U.S. military.

Perhaps there's some obscure advantage in trained military interrogators masquerading as FBI agents, but we doubt it – as did the FBI, which complained about the practice.

Which leads us to the more likely explanation: The military chain of command was badly out of control. As one FBI agent suggested in a December 2003 memo, the military was content to cross interrogation boundaries and leave the FBI "holding the bag." The memos suggest that the FBI's complaints fell on deaf ears.

It's unclear what – if any – actions have been taken to correct this abuse. The highly redacted memos are sketchy and describe events that took place more than a year ago. In response, Pentagon officials, who remain vague and circumspect about the incidents, say that abusive tactics are not tolerated and that some investigations are under way.

It would be naive to think that military interrogators and FBI agents would operate by the same rules. The military doesn't extend the same rights to its soldiers that U.S. civilians enjoy, let alone extend those rights to enemy prisoners.

These memos, however, provide reasons to suspect that serious abuses occurred and that prisoner abuses were more than the isolated actions of a few overzealous and rogue soldiers. A forthright answer from the top is in order.