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Report: CIA Holds Top Al Qaeda Suspects in Jordan

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JERUSALEM (Reuters) - The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency is holding top al Qaeda suspects in a secret Jordanian jail where they are subjected to interrogation methods banned in the United States, an Israeli newspaper said Wednesday.

Haaretz daily said at least 11 men held incommunicado in Jordan include Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the hijacked airliner attacks on New York and Washington, and Hambali, accused of being al Qaeda's ally in southeast Asia.

There was no immediate comment from U.S. officials or Jordan, which is seen as a key ally in the U.S.-led war on terror.

Haaretz, citing international intelligence sources, said: "Their detention outside the U.S. enables CIA interrogators to apply interrogation methods that are banned by U.S. law, and to do so in a country where cooperation with the Americans is particularly close, thereby reducing the danger of leaks."

International human rights groups have accused the United States of circumventing guidelines on interrogation by shipping al Qaeda suspects to allied states where such legal scrutiny is lacking.

Washington insists its interrogators operate within the law. U.S. officials say incommunicado detentions in secret locations are essential for security and that many suspects held have provided valuable intelligence that has foiled planned attacks.

In "Rumsfeld's War," a book drawing on declassified Pentagon documents, Washington Times correspondent Rowan Scarborough said that Jordanian interrogators have helped U.S. counterparts in handling al Qaeda suspects held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"U.S. interrogators are known to threaten some detainees with shipping them off to Jordan if they don't cooperate," Scarborough said. "Like other Middle Eastern countries, Jordan uses physical means to coerce confessions and vital intelligence information."