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## **Bush Urged to Specify U.S. Policy on Torture**

Retired military leaders express concern after the president made ambiguous remarks on the new ban last month.

Reuters  
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WASHINGTON -- A group of retired military officers urged President Bush on Thursday to spell out how he would enforce a ban on the torture of U.S.-held prisoners, complaining that he muddied the issue in a statement last month.

Bush reluctantly accepted the ban, pushed by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), after scandals over abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, harsh interrogations at the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and reports that the CIA ran secret prisons abroad to hold terrorism suspects.

Retired military leaders, including Marine Gen. Joseph P. Hoar, who was commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East, said Bush should clarify his stance after making a statement last month that some experts said signaled he would bypass rules for treatment of detainees when he saw fit, even after he signed them into law.

The 22 former military officers said in a letter that Bush should ensure that his administration spoke "with a consistent voice to make clear that the United States now has a single standard of conduct specified in law that governs all interrogations."

In a telephone news conference, Hoar said Bush's statement "diluted the impact of the McCain amendment" by indicating "that there were going to be exceptions, and the president has the ability to do that."

McCain, who endured torture as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, spearheaded the bill to set standards for detainees' treatment that won big majorities in the Senate and House.

Bush's statement, issued after he signed the bill putting the amendment into law, said the "executive branch shall construe [the law] in a manner consistent with the authority of the president ... as commander in chief."

The statement also said the White House's approach would be "consistent with the constitutional limitations on the judicial power, which will assist in achieving the shared objective of the Congress and the president ... of protecting the American people from further terrorist attacks."