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Ten Guantanamo detainees detail abuses

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Similar abuses at Guantanamo were described by FBI agents

At least 10 current and former detainees at the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detailed abuses similar to those described by FBI agents, The Washington Post reports on its Web site.

In public statements after their release and in documents filed with federal courts, the 10 detainees said that they were beaten by the U.S. soldiers during interrogations, shackled to the floor, together with other forms of mistreatment used to force them to confess to having links or being members of Al Qaeda or the Taliban, The Post added.

Even some of the detainees' lawyers said that at first they were a bit skeptical, mainly because there has been little evidence that captors at Guantanamo Bay engaged in the kind of abuse discovered at Abu Ghraib jail outside Baghdad.

But last Monday, the American Civil Liberties Union released FBI documents, obtained through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit, describing serious mistreatment and abuses of detainees at Guantanamo.

"On a couple of occasions, I entered interview rooms to find a detainee chained hand and foot in a fetal position to the floor, with no chair, food or water," an FBI agent wrote on Aug. 2, 2004, for example. "Most times they had urinated or defecated on themselves, and had been left there for 18, 24 hours or more."

The newspaper also quoted Brent Mickum, one of the detainees attorney, as saying that "now there's no question these guys have been tortured."

Martin Mubanga, a British detainee and one of Mickum's clients, sent a letter to his sister, telling her that the U.S. military police were treating him like a "rent boy"; a male prostitute.

However, the Pentagon officials and lawyers claim that the U.S. military treatment of the detainees was humane and has complied with treaties on the handling of enemy prisoners "to the extent possible", The Post said.

Detainees who made public allegations of torture, said that they were beaten and kicked by U.S. soldiers. They also said that they tight shackles to their legs.

They added that military personnel left them in rooms with freezing temperatures and stifling heat, and paraded them naked around the prison while military police took pictures of them, the paper said.

Also former British Guantanamo detainees said that several young prisoners told them that U.S. guards took them to isolated sections of the prison and raped and sexually abused them, the report added.

The British released detainees added that an Algerian man "forced to watch a video supposedly showing two detainees dressed in orange, one sodomizing the other, and was told that it would happen to him if he didn't cooperate", The Post said.

Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud Al Qosi, a Sudanese detainee, said in court documents that interrogators at Guantanamo Bay wrapped prisoners in an Israeli flag.

In an Aug. 16 e-mail, an FBI agent said that he saw one of the detainees sitting in an interview room "with an Israeli flag draped around him, loud music being played and a strobe light flashing."

Many of the abuse complains were filed in federal courts, following the Supreme Court ruling in June which allowed Guantanamo detainees to challenge their imprisonment in court. About 60 of the 550 men held in Guantanamo filed complains.

In a recently declassified letter to the court, Moazzam Begg, a British detainee who was kept in solitary confinement in Guantanamo Bay since February, said that he was harshly beaten by U.S. guards and heard "the terrifying screams of fellow detainees facing similar methods." He also said that he witnessed two detainees die after being severely beaten by U.S. military personnel.

Also, Feroz Abbasi, who was arrested in Afghanistan, said that he was kept in solitary confinement for more than a year. He said that on the same day U.S. officials say he "confessed" to training as a "suicide bomber" working for Al Qaeda network, his captors tortured him to force him to confess, adding that he had to be treated for injuries at the prison hospital.

Abbasi's lawyer, Gitanjali S. Gutierrez, said she was convinced that her client and others detainees were in great danger in the U.S. military's hands as soon as she saw them.

"I left my first visit with them thinking the longer they are in Guantanamo, the more psychological and physical damage they are going to suffer at that place," she said.

However, Col. David McWilliams, spokesman for the U.S. Southern Command, which is in charge of the prison rejected the abuse allegations, saying that "the claim that detainees have been physically abused, beaten or tortured is simply not true."

Some of the detainees who retained lawyers refused to take part in military reviews of their cases at Guantanamo Bay, and instead asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to investigate their abuse allegation.

And that was the case for Mamdouh Habib, Australian. Lawyers familiar with Habib's case and other British detainees said that he was in "catastrophic shape" when he arrived in Cuba.

Habib's fingernails were missing, and he regularly bled from his nose, mouth and ears while sleeping at the prison, but U.S. soldiers denied him treatment, former Guantanamo detainees said in a report.

Other detainees also said that Habib asked for medical help, but U.S. military personnel refused, saying "if you cooperate with your interrogators, then we can do something."

But Joseph Margulies, Habib's lawyer, refused to elaborate, saying that the records are classified.

"Now it's not just my allegations of torture, not just my client's -- but now it's the FBI's," Margulies said. "President Bush should make a public statement: It now appears torture is going on at Guantanamo and we won't rely on these coerced confessions."