

The following text may be printed, copy/pasted, or downloaded and emailed.

Army Manual Would Govern Torture Ban

Sen. John McCain's anti-torture amendment would limit interrogation techniques to those outlined in an Army field manual, in an effort to ban inhumane treatment by Americans on suspected terrorists.

DREW BROWN

The Miami Herald

December 18, 2005

Under the torture ban sponsored by Sen. John McCain, Americans questioning suspected terrorists would be limited to techniques authorized by the Army's manual on intelligence interrogation, a guide that clearly spells out the rules.

President Bush on Thursday accepted McCain's measure to ban cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of terrorist suspects by American interrogators. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have endorsed it by wide margins.

The Army manual says "the use of force, mental torture, threats, insults, or exposure to unpleasant and inhumane treatment of any kind is prohibited by law and is neither authorized nor condoned by the U.S. Government." Defense officials say those rules will remain the standard.

"We have had requirements for humane treatment from the beginning," Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Thursday. "Anytime there has been something other than humane treatment, there has been prosecution."

Even with a dozen major reviews and the prosecution of more than 200 U.S. troops for incidents of abuse, the American military is struggling to overcome the black eye it received over abusive treatment reported at U.S. detention facilities in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

The manual was last updated in 1992 and is now being revised again. Defense officials declined to talk about the changes until they're completed.

Andrea Jones, a McCain spokeswoman, said McCain was confident that the Army wouldn't add anything to its manual that could counteract or weaken his amendment. McCain, R-Ariz., said last week that his amendment made "it pretty clear what would have to be in the field manual."

The manual outlines 17 acceptable methods ranging from direct questioning to providing incentives or manipulating prisoners' emotions, fears, pride and egos. Threats and the use of force, drugs, brainwashing and mental torture or coercion are prohibited.

"Experience indicates that the use of force is not necessary to gain the cooperation of sources for interrogation," according to the manual. "Therefore, the use of force is a poor technique, as it yields unreliable results, may damage subsequent collection efforts, and can induce the source to say whatever he thinks the interrogator wants to hear."

Interrogators are advised to use patience and tact, exert self-control and remain objective, dispassionate and professional during questioning.

According to a Defense Department background paper dated June 22, 2004, the interrogation manual was used as the guide at Guantánamo Bay for all of 2002. In December 2002, Rumsfeld approved 17 additional techniques, which appear to have been grounded in a January 2002 memo by John Yoo, a deputy assistant attorney general. Yoo wrote that suspected al Qaeda and Taliban prisoners were not subject to treatment standards of the Geneva Conventions.