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U.S. Report Details Guantanamo Abuses

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GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba -- A detainee was forced to kneel so many times he was bruised, a barber gave reverse mohawks and a female interrogator ran her fingers through a prisoner's hair and sat in his lap, the U.S. government says in the most detailed accounting of eight abuse cases at its Guantanamo Bay prison for terror suspects.

Those responsible for the abuse have been demoted, reprimanded or sent for more training, according to an 800-word U.S. military response to a written query from The Associated Press.

Allegations of mistreatment at Guantanamo, where 550 terror suspects have been held for nearly three years, surfaced after the abuse scandal broke last year at the U.S.-run Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, where pictures showed beatings and sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners.

The details of abuse at Guantanamo come as lawyers for several prisoners challenge evidence presented by the government, saying some could have been obtained by force.

Only four prisoners have been formally charged at Guantanamo, where most are held without charge or access to lawyers. The military has reported 34 suicide attempts among detainees, though none has been reported since January.

Guantanamo's new commander says lessons have been learned from past abuses cases and troops are treating detainees humanely with a rigorous system of checks and balances.

"They've not been mistreated, they've not been tortured in any respect," Army Brig. Gen. Jay Hood said in an interview Wednesday.

Human rights monitors are not convinced.

"We're confident that there's more information out there that hasn't been released," said Jameel Jaffer of the American Civil Liberties Union, which has obtained nearly 6,000 documents about procedures at U.S.-run prisons. He was in Guantanamo to observe pretrial hearings.

Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, now in charge of U.S.-run prisons in Iraq, commanded the Guantanamo prison from November 2002 to March 2004 with a mandate to get better intelligence. Most abuses reported in August by James R. Schlesinger, who headed a U.S. Congressional committee to investigate abuses in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo, occurred under Miller's watch.

The Department of Defense, responding to an AP query made nearly two months ago, this week provided details of the eight Guantanamo abuses cases Schlesinger cited. No names were given.

In one case, a female interrogator took off her uniform top to expose her T-shirt to a detainee, ran her fingers through his hair and climbed on his lap in April 2003. A supervisor monitoring the session terminated it, and the woman was reprimanded and sent for more training, the military said.

The same month, an interrogator told military police to repeatedly bring a detainee from a standing to kneeling position, so much that his knees were bruised, the government said. The interrogator got a written reprimand and Miller reportedly stopped use of that technique.

Also that month, a guard was charged with dereliction of duty and assault after a detainee assaulted another guard. After the detainee was subdued, the guard punched the prisoner with his fist. He was demoted.

In a separate case, a guard was charged with assault after he sprayed a detainee with a hose when the prisoner allegedly tried to throw water from his toilet at him in September 2002. The guard was reduced in rank and reassigned.

Another female interrogator wiped dye from a red magic marker on a detainee's shirt, telling him it was blood, after he allegedly spat on her. She received a verbal reprimand in early 2003.

In March 2003, a military policeman used pepper spray on a detainee allegedly preparing to throw unidentified liquid on an officer. The policeman was acquitted by a court martial.

Incidents this year include a military policeman who squirted a detainee with water in February, and a camp barber who gave two "unusual haircuts." The haircuts were reverse mohawks, according to a government official who spoke on condition of anonymity. The barber gave the cuts to frustrate detainee efforts to wear their hair the same way to demonstrate unity, the government said. The barber and his company were reprimanded.

Air Force Lt. Col. Sharon Shaffer, defense attorney for a Guantanamo prisoner, announced Thursday that she would file a petition in federal court challenging her client's detention and alleging systematic abuse at the prison. She represents Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud al-Qosi of Sudan, an alleged al-Qaida paymaster whose conspiracy trial is scheduled for February.

"The abuse allegations at Guantanamo are a matter of growing concern," Shaffer said. "He was constantly being told he would be sent to Egypt to be interrogated, where many of the detainees believed they would be killed. And he was forced to sit for hours in the freezing cold."

At least one military insider at Guantanamo has gone public with allegations of abuse -- a military police officer who was injured after going undercover as a detainee.

National Guardsman Sean Baker said the attack occurred in November 2002, the month after Miller arrived in Guantanamo, when he was told to put on an orange detainee jumpsuit, get in a cell and wait for an Initial Response Force -- the teams used to subdue misbehaving detainees.

From under the bunk, Baker heard the extraction team come in, he said in his latest comments during a CBS television program aired Wednesday.

"My face was down. And of course, they're pushing it down against the steel floor, you know, my right temple, pushing it down against the floor," Baker told CBS.

The incident was purportedly recorded, one of some 500 hours of tapes that the military has refused to publicly release.

Baker said he tried to tell his attackers he was a soldier but they repeatedly slammed his head against the floor. Baker was airlifted to a naval hospital in Virginia where doctors said he suffered a brain injury. He has been plagued by seizures since, he said.

