

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

FBI Interrogators in Cuba Opposed Aggressive Tactics

Josh White
Washington Post
February 24, 2006

FBI officials who were interrogating terrorism suspects at the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in 2002 and 2003 strenuously objected to aggressive techniques the military was using and believed they could be illegal, according to FBI memos released yesterday.

The agents wrote in memos and e-mails that they were at odds with interrogators working for a Defense Intelligence Agency human-intelligence group and with guidance from senior Pentagon officials. The agents also repeatedly expressed their concerns to the senior military officer at the base, Army Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, and said that the less aggressive FBI-approved methods were more effective.

"Although MGEN Miller acknowledged positive aspects of this approach, it was apparent that he favored DHS's interrogation methods, despite FBI assertions that such methods could easily result in the elicitation of unreliable and legally inadmissible information," one FBI agent wrote to senior FBI officials in May 2003, referring to the Defense Humint Service. Miller later traveled to Iraq and oversaw all detention operations there.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which obtained the memos in a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit, first released versions of them in December 2004. But the memos released yesterday included previously blacked-out statements and detailed discussions of the FBI's concerns.

"Now we can say that the documents show conclusively that abuse and torture at Guantanamo was not the result of rogue elements but was the consequence of policies deliberately adopted by senior military and Pentagon officials," said Jameel Jaffer, an ACLU lawyer.

Air Force Lt. Col. John Skinner, a Pentagon spokesman, said a series of investigations and reviews have shown that Defense Department officials never encouraged or condoned abuse. "No matter how hard some may try to manipulate documents and information to support their myth, the facts tell a different story," Skinner said. "Guantanamo remains a safe, humane and professional detention operation."

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld approved an expanded list of interrogation tactics in December 2002 for use on an important suspect. Rumsfeld later rescinded the list. A military investigation into allegations of abuse at Guantanamo Bay found that the cumulative effect of the detainee's treatment was abusive but not illegal.

One FBI agent wrote in an e-mail that he observed two military interrogators "showing a detainee homosexual porn movies and using a strobe light" in an interrogation room adjoining one he was using, adding that he had also heard of detainees being wrapped in Israeli flags. Detainees have complained of similar treatment.

The FBI documents also show that FBI officials declined to get involved in investigating abuse at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison in January 2004, days after officials learned there was photographic evidence of abuse and several months before it became public.

"First, the matter truly is outside our mission and would squander resources," wrote an FBI official on Jan. 22, 2004. "Second, we need to maintain good will and relations with those operating the prison. Our involvement in the investigation of the alleged abuse might harm our liaison."