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New Army documents reveal US knew of and approved torture before Abu Ghraib scandal

RAW STORY

Published: Tuesday May 2, 2006

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BREAKING HARD -- FROM AN ACLU RELEASE TO RAW STORY.

#

New Army documents released by the American Civil Liberties Union today reveal that Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez ordered interrogators to "go to the outer limits" to get information from detainees. The documents also show that senior government officials were aware of abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan before the Abu Ghraib scandal broke.



SECRET

document (Frag Order), which spells out the rules of engagement by which the interrogators were supposed to operate under. went on to say the people were encourage to go to the outer limits to get information from the detainees by people who wanted the information. was asked to whom was referring and stated LTG SANCHEZ. said there was desperate need to get information from the detainees. did not have additional information to provide, and provided a contact number to reach until retires at the end of June 04.

"When our leaders allow and even encourage abuse at the 'outer limits', America suffers," said Anthony D. Romero, ACLU Executive Director. "A nation that works to bring freedom and liberty to other parts of the world shouldn't stomach brutality and inhumanity within its ranks. This abuse of power was engineered and accepted at the highest levels of our government."

Among the documents released today by the ACLU is a May 19, 2004 Defense Intelligence Agency document implicating Sanchez in potentially abusive interrogation techniques. In the document, an officer in charge of a team of interrogators stated that there was a 35-page order spelling out the rules of engagement that interrogators were supposed to follow, and that they were encouraged to "go to the outer limits to get information from the detainees by people who wanted the information." When asked to whom the officer was referring, the officer answered "LTG Sanchez." The officer stated that the expectation coming from "Headquarters" was to break the detainees.

The ACLU also released an Information Paper entitled "Allegations of Detainee Abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan" dated April 2, 2004, two weeks before the world saw the pictures of torture at Abu Ghraib prison. The paper outlined the status of 62 investigations of detainee abuse and detainee deaths. Cases include assaults, punching, kicking and beatings, mock executions, sexual assault of a female detainee, threatening to kill an Iraqi child to "send a message to other Iraqis," stripping detainees, beating them and shocking them with a blasting device, throwing rocks at handcuffed Iraqi children, choking detainees with knots of their scarves and interrogations at gunpoint.

The ACLU said the document makes clear that while President Bush and other officials

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9/11 Blogger.com

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assured the world that what occurred at Abu Ghraib was the work of "a few bad apples," the government knew that abuse was happening in numerous facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan. Of the 62 cases being investigated at the time, at least 26 involved detainee deaths. Some of the cases had already gone through a court-martial proceeding. The abuses went beyond Abu Ghraib, and touched Camp Cropper, Camp Bucca and other detention centers in Mosul, Samarra, Baghdad, Tikrit, as well as Orgun-E in Afghanistan.

"These documents are further proof that the abuse of detainees was widespread and systemic, and not aberrational," said Amrit Singh, a staff attorney with the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project. "We know that senior officials endorsed this abuse, but these officials have yet to be held accountable."

Last week, the government authenticated that two videos released by the Palm Beach Post in March 2005 were videos that the government was withholding from the ACLU's Freedom of Information Act request. The videos are part of a set that has come to be known as the "Ramadi Madness" videos and were made by members of the West Palm Beach-based Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment. The two scenes the government authenticated are called "See Haj Run" and "Blood Clot." They depict scenes of urban battle and persons being captured and detained by U.S. forces.

Among the more than 9,000 pages of Defense Department documents made public by the ACLU today are several investigations detailing cruel and degrading treatment and killings. The investigations include:

- An investigation into the death of a detainee at Forward Operating Base Rifles near Al Asad, Iraq established probable cause to believe that several soldiers assaulted a detainee and committed negligent homicide, and conspired to cover up the death. The detainee died when a soldier lifted him up from the floor by placing a baton under his chin, fracturing his hyoid bone. It appears that the soldiers received written letters of reprimand and counseling. The full document is online [here](#).
- A heavily redacted e-mail dated May 25, 2004 shows that a presumed officer or civilian government official was told of three reports of abuse of detainees described as "probably true/valid." One detainee was "in such poor physical shape from obvious beatings that [name redacted] asked the MP's to note his condition before he proceeded with interrogation." Another detainee was "in such bad shape ... that he was laying down in his own feces." These cases seem to have occurred in Abu Ghraib and Camp Cropper. The full document is online [here](#).
- An investigation shows a doctor cleared a detainee for further interrogations, despite claims he had been beaten and shocked with a taser. The medic confirmed that the detainee's injuries were consistent with his allegations, stating, "Everything he described he had on his body." Yet, the medic cleared him for further interrogation, giving him Tylenol for the pain. There is no indication that the medic reported this abuse. The full document is online [here](#).

Today's documents come in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed by the ACLU, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Physicians for Human Rights, Veterans for Common Sense and Veterans for Peace. The New York Civil Liberties Union is co-counsel in the case.

To date, more than 100,000 pages of government documents have been released detailing the torture and abuse of detainees. The ACLU recently launched a new powerful search engine for the public to access the documents at [www.aclu.org/torturefoiasearch](#). The search engine allows people to uncover details about abuse that may not have been reported in the media, said the ACLU.

The FOIA lawsuit is being handled by Lawrence Lustberg and Megan Lewis of the New Jersey-based law firm Gibbons, Del Deo, Dolan, Griffinger & Vecchione, P.C. Other attorneys in the case are Amrit Singh, Jameel Jaffer and Judy Rabinovitz of the ACLU; Arthur Eisenberg and Beth Haroules of the NYCLU; and Barbara Olshansky of the Center for Constitutional Rights.

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