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The Nation

Torture Tactics Refined In US Prisons, ACLU Says

By Nathan Burchfiel
CNSNews.com Staff Writer
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(CNSNews.com) - The director of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Prisoner Project Wednesday accused U.S. governments past and present of honing torture tactics in American prisons before they were allegedly implemented in terrorist detention centers in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"If you look at the iconic pictures from Abu Ghraib," Elizabeth Alexander told reporters at the U.S. Capitol Wednesday, "you can match up these photos with the same abuses at American prisons, each one of them."

Alexander said the infamous torture tactics uncovered at Abu Ghraib were first used in American prisons, but without cameras. "The photo from Abu Ghraib showing a mock execution matches events in Sacramento, California, in which guards staged mock executions of prisoners," she said.

The images of dogs being used to intimidate prisoners portray similar events that occurred in a Texas jail, according to Alexander, who added that the sexual humiliation that occurred in Abu Ghraib is similar to sexual abuse in women's prisons in the United States.

She said the ACLU knows and has proven that the torture tactics have been used in American prisons, but lacks the photographic evidence found at Abu Ghraib because "you could never get a camera into an American prison."

Alexander made the accusations at a panel discussion on the "history, experimentation, techniques, training, exporting and use of torture by [the] U.S. government," sponsored by outgoing U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.).

McKinney was not at the event, which was moderated by her Special Project Assistant, John Judge. Calls placed to McKinney's Washington, D.C., office were unanswered Wednesday.

In a written statement submitted by University of Wisconsin Professor Alfred McCoy and read by Judge at Wednesday's event, McCoy asserted that the tactics used at Abu Ghraib were "not the sadism of a few creeps but instead [are] the two key trademarks of the CIA's psychological torture."

McCoy wrote that psychological torture has been developed over the



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"past half century" in the U.S. intelligence community into a "distinctively American interrogation technique."

McCoy, who recently published a book entitled "A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation from the Cold War to the War on Terror," argued that the CIA has been testing and implementing various forms of psychological torture since the 1950s.

He called psychological torture "a central, if clandestine facet of American foreign policy."

James Carafano, a senior research fellow for national security at the conservative Heritage Foundation, said if there is evidence of abuse in American prisons, it should be given to authorities.

"If somebody made this assertion I would hope they have evidence to support it," he told **Cybercast News Service**, "and if they have evidence to support it they should give it to the authorities and people should be tried for crimes because torture is illegal. It's illegal whether you do it inside or outside the United States."

Carafano declined to comment specifically on the claims by Alexander and McCoy because he has not seen their full accusations, but said "generally people tend to play fast and loose with the term torture."

"People who know better tend to use the word torture because it kind of creates this visceral reaction and they know flat well, it doesn't actually meet the legal definition of torture," he said.

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