

Gen. Sanchez Memo: One More Link From Rumsfeld and Cambone, to Abu Ghraib

by Edward Spannaus

A newly-released memorandum on prisoner interrogation methods, written in 2003 by the top U.S. commander in Iraq, establishes yet another link from the policies set by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other top Pentagon civilians, directly to the abuse and torture of prisoners that occurred at Abu Ghraib and other detention centers in Iraq. The content of the memo also suggests that the commander, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, may have perjured himself in testimony before a U.S. Senate committee last year, when he flatly denied approving of the exact methods of interrogation which he listed and approved in the newly-disclosed document.

The memo referred to was written by General Sanchez on Sept. 14, 2003—less than a week after the commander of the U.S. prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, had completed a visit to Iraq, where he visited Sanchez's command headquarters, as well as Task Force 20, one of Rumsfeld's Special Operations Forces (SOF) hunter-killer squads.

Miller had been sent to Iraq by the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, Steven Cambone, and by Cambone's fanatical Muslim-hating deputy, Gen. Jerry Boykin, for the purpose of injecting the interrogation methods used at Guantanamo, into the interrogation process in Iraq. Miller himself described his mission as being to "Gitmo-ize" the Iraq interrogation operations, and he told top officers in Iraq that "you have to treat these detainees like dogs."

One knowledgeable source has told *EIR* that Rumsfeld was constantly on the phone with Miller during Miller's time in Iraq; for part of that time, Rumsfeld himself was in Iraq, and personally visited Abu Ghraib prison on Sept. 6; Miller left on Sept. 9.

Miller had brought with him Rumsfeld's policy guidelines for Guantanamo, issued in April 2003, in which Rumsfeld had approved 24 specific harsh interrogation techniques. These were in turn based on the report of the Pentagon Working Group on Detentions, which had been set up by Rumsfeld in January 2003, after questions had arisen within the military about the legality of interrogation techniques approved by Rumsfeld for use in Afghanistan and Guantanamo. (See *EIR*, March 18). The Working Group was wracked by bitter controversy, and lawyers from the military services were frozen out of the group's deliberations.

Pressure on Interrogators

Clearly, the Sanchez memo was not something created on the General's own initiative: It followed directly from Miller's visit. The battlefield context is also relevant: Over the summer of 2003, U.S. forces were faced with a growing insurgency and resistance, which Rumsfeld and the Pentagon civilian leadership had stubbornly refused to anticipate. Ground commanders in Iraq were under heavy pressure, directly from Washington, to obtain more "actionable intelligence," and these pressures were magnified as they were transmitted to interrogators in the field. In August for example, an aide to Sanchez sent an e-mail to Military Intelligence personnel, declaring that "the gloves are coming off," and that "we want these individuals broken."

Sanchez's memorandum is entitled "Interrogation and Counter-Resistance Policy," and it says that it is "modelled on the one implemented for interrogations at Guantanamo Bay, but modelled for applicability to a theatre of war in which the Geneva Conventions apply." (The reference to the Geneva Conventions is a bit of "cover-your-ass" sophistry, since a number of the methods listed would not be permitted under the Geneva Conventions, even for non-prisoners-of-war.)

In reference to this self-serving statement about the Geneva Conventions, the Schlesinger Report on DOD Detainee Operations alluded to the existence of informal and unofficial channels of communication, explaining that "there was also a store of common lore and practice within the interrogator community circulating through Guantanamo, Afghanistan, and elsewhere."

Among the techniques explicitly approved by Sanchez, were: Fear Up Harsh; Fear Up Mild; Sleep Adjustment; Dietary Manipulation; Environmental Manipulation; Isolation; Presence of Military Working Dogs ("Exploits Arab fear of dogs. . ."); Yelling, Loud Music, Light Control, and Stress Positions.

According to the ACLU, which obtained the Sanchez memo in an FOIA lawsuit, 12 of the techniques cited "far exceeded the limits established by the Army's own Field Manual," referring to Army Field Manual 34-52 which governs the Army's conduct of interrogation operations. They also violate the Geneva Conventions, which protect all persons in a zone of conflict from "cruel, inhuman, and degrading" treatment.

Did Sanchez Commit Perjury?

On March 30, the ACLU sent a letter to Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, asking him to open an investigation into possible perjury by Sanchez, in sworn testimony given to the Senate Armed Services Committee on May 19, 2004. At that hearing, Sen. Jack Reed (R-R.I.) asked Sanchez about an article in *USA Today*, saying, “It’s been reported that you ordered or approved the use of sleep deprivation, intimidation by guard dogs, excessive noise, and inducing fear as an interrogation method for a prisoner in Abu Ghraib prison—is that correct?”

Sanchez responded: “Sir, that may be correct that it’s in a news article, but I never approved any of those measures to be used within the CJTF-7 [Combined Joint Task Force-7] at any time in the last year.”

When pressed by Reed, Sanchez repeated: “I have never approved the use of any of those methods within CJTF-7 in the 12-and-a-half months that I’ve been in Iraq.”

In the letter to Gonzales, the ACLU notes: “The need for General Sanchez and all high-level government officials to tell the truth could not be more important. The nation cannot afford to have anyone coverup their wrongdoing when such a horrific abuse was the result.”

The ACLU also renewed its request that Gonzales recuse himself from this investigation and appoint a special counsel, because of his own involvement in the formulation of the policies which led to the abandoning of the Geneva Conventions and the abuse of prisoners.

Worse Than Abu Ghraib

More information continues to seep out concerning the torture and abuse of prisoners at Guantanamo, which, in the view of military law experts consulted by *EIR*, is much more damaging than what happened at Abu Ghraib, because the Guantanamo abuses were clearly deliberate, systematic, and planned out by high-level officials.

More than 500 hours of videotapes of prisoner interrogations at Guantanamo exist, according to an Australian lawyer who formerly represented David Hicks, an Australian citizen held at Guantanamo. The lawyer, Stephen Kenny, said that he believes that “these videos, if they are ever released, will be as explosive as anything from Abu Ghraib.” The existence of the tapes came to light after a member of the U.S. military, who was posing as a prisoner in a training exercise for the military’s Immediate Reaction Force, was beaten so badly that he reportedly suffered permanent brain damage. Kenny said that a “secret military review” found 10 cases of abuse in only 20 hours of tape.

Further accounts of torture and abuse came from Kristine Huskey, a lawyer at the Washington office of Shearman & Sterling, who represents a group of Kuwaiti prisoners at Guantanamo. Huskey told a conference at American University’s Washington College of Law on March 24, that her clients have “had their bones broken, they have been sodom-

ized, and have been threatened with sodomy.”

More evidence of military opposition to the torture policies promoted by Rumsfeld and Miller has come to light, with the disclosure that top U.S. Navy officials were so outraged at abusive methods, that they considered pulling Navy interrogators out of operations at Guantanamo during 2002. The *Boston Globe* reported on March 16, that in December 2002, a Navy psychologist had reported that interrogators at Guantanamo were using “abusive techniques.” In another incident around the same time, the Defense Department’s Joint Investigative Service, which includes Navy investigators, formally “disassociated” itself from the interrogation of a particular detainee, who had been subjected to what they considered particularly abusive and degrading treatment.

This led the Navy to consider pulling out of these interrogation operations altogether. U.S. Navy General Counsel Alberto Moro reportedly told colleagues that the techniques being used were “unlawful and unworthy of the military services.”

And on March 31, National Public Radio reported on yet another military investigation of interrogation methods at Guantanamo, which was triggered by FBI memos reporting on torture and abuse of detainees—which had gotten so bad that the FBI refused to allow its agents to participate in interrogations.

The likelihood of continued abuses is raised by the increasing number of prisoners being held by the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to a report released on March 30 by Human Rights First (HRF). The U.S. is now detaining a record 10,200 people in Iraq, more than twice that of five months ago. The number of detainees held in Afghanistan is also on the rise, having risen from 350 in June 2004, to an estimated 600 currently. No numbers for Afghanistan are available since January 2005, because the Department of Defense has introduced a policy of classifying information related to U.S. detentions in Afghanistan, including the number of detainees held, and the specific legal basis for their detentions.

The HRF report also cites the continued reliance on makeshift “transient” detention facilities—which often are nothing more than a series of trailers surrounded by barbed wire. “Many of the worst alleged abuses of detainees, including deaths in custody, have occurred in these facilities, where visits from the Red Cross are limited,” the report says.

The failure to follow the Geneva Conventions, and the abuses of prisoners, has not only put U.S. forces at risk, but it has undermined U.S. intelligence and counterinsurgency efforts, the HRF report notes, quoting a U.S. intelligence officer who had been in Afghanistan as warning: “The more a prisoner hates America, the harder he will be to break. The more a population hates America, the less likely its citizens will be to lead us to a suspect.”

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