Abuse Of Iraqi POWs By GIs Probed

60 Minutes II Has Exclusive Report On Alleged Mistreatment

By Rebecca Leung

(CBS) Last month, the U.S. Army announced 17 soldiers in Iraq, including a brigadier general, had been removed from duty after charges of mistreating Iraqi prisoners.

But the details of what happened have been kept secret, until now.

It turns out photographs surfaced showing American soldiers abusing and humiliating Iraqis being held at a prison near Baghdad. The Army investigated, and issued a scathing report.

Now, an Army general and her command staff may face the end of long military careers. And six soldiers are facing court martial in Iraq -- and possible prison time.

Correspondent Dan Rather talks to one of those soldiers. And, for the first time, 60 Minutes II will show some of the pictures that led to the Army investigation.

According to the U.S. Army, one Iraqi prisoner was told to stand on a box with his head covered, wires attached to his hands. He was told that if he fell off the box, he would be electrocuted.

It was this picture, and dozens of others, that prompted an investigation by the U.S. Army. On Tuesday, 60 Minutes II asked Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of coalition operations in Iraq, what went wrong.

“Frankly, I think all of us are disappointed by the actions of the few,” says Kimmitt. “Every day, we...
love our soldiers, but frankly, some days we're not always proud of our soldiers."

For decades under Saddam Hussein, many prisoners who were taken to the Abu Ghraib prison never came out. It was the centerpiece of Saddam’s empire of fear, and those prisoners who did make it out told nightmarish tales of torture beyond imagining – and executions without reason.

60 Minutes II talked about the prison and shared pictures of what Americans did there with two men who have extensive interrogation experience: Former Marine Lt. Col. Bill Cowan and former CIA Bureau Chief Bob Baer.

"I visited Abu Ghraib a couple of days after it was liberated. It was the most awful sight I've ever seen. I said, ‘If there's ever a reason to get rid of Saddam Hussein, it's because of Abu Ghraib,'” says Baer. “There were bodies that were eaten by dogs, torture. You know, electrodes coming out of the walls. It was an awful place."

"We went into Iraq to stop things like this from happening, and indeed, here they are happening under our tutelage,” says Cowan.

It was American soldiers serving as military police at Abu Ghraib who took these pictures. The investigation started when one soldier got them from a friend, and gave them to his commanders. 60 Minutes II has a dozen of these pictures, and there are many more – pictures that show Americans, men and women in military uniforms, posing with naked Iraqi prisoners.

There are shots of the prisoners stacked in a pyramid, one with a slur written on his skin in English.

In some, the male prisoners are positioned to simulate sex with each other. And in most of the pictures, the Americans are laughing, posing, pointing, or giving the camera a thumbs-up.

60 Minutes II was only able to contact one of the soldiers facing charges. But the Army says they are all in Iraq, awaiting court martial.

"What can the Army say specifically to Iraqis and others who are going to see this and take it personally," Rather asked Kimmitt, in an interview conducted by satellite from Baghdad.

"The first thing I’d say is we’re appalled as well. These are our fellow soldiers. These are the people we work with every day, and they represent us. They wear the same uniform as us, and they let their fellow soldiers down,” says Kimmitt.

“Our soldiers could be taken prisoner as well. And we expect our soldiers to be treated well by the adversary, by the enemy. And if we can't hold ourselves up as an example of how to treat people with
dignity and respect ... We can't ask that other nations to that to our soldiers as well."

“So what would I tell the people of Iraq? This is wrong. This is reprehensible. But this is not representative of the 150,000 soldiers that are over here,” adds Kimmitt. “I'd say the same thing to the American people... Don't judge your army based on the actions of a few."

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