

# Photos fuel terrorist causes

Photographs of soldiers degrading Iraqi prisoners have been a blessing to terrorists, observers say

By Jim Landers  
The Dallas Morning News (KRT)

WASHINGTON — American soldiers' abuse of Iraqi prisoners has set back the Bush administration's efforts to rally the Arab world to embrace democratic values and reject Islamic extremism, Arab commentators say.

"This is basically a very good and useful piece of propaganda to be used by the extremist forces who are waging war right now in several countries, including Iraq and Saudi Arabia," said Mansoor al-Jamri, editor in chief of the Bahraini newspaper Al Wasat.

"Many people didn't believe the Americans were going to brutalize the Iraqi people. They thought they might be tough, that they might bomb a mosque where somebody was sniping at them, but to brutalize prisoners was out of the minds of the majority of the people — even those with anti-American feelings," he said Tuesday.

Photos of U.S. soldiers engaging in abuse and humiliation of inmates at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison have been

widely published in the Arab press since first aired last week in the United States. Cable news outlets such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya have shown the images repeatedly. An Arab League spokesman described them as "beyond disgust."

President Bush has said he was disgusted by the abuse, and White House National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice appeared Tuesday on Al-Arabiya to describe the detainees' treatment as "unacceptable."

"We will get to the bottom of it," she said. "And those who are responsible will be punished."

In a sign of the administration's concern over the controversy, Rice said President Bush would speak directly to the Arab world. The White House said the president would do interviews with Arab TV, but offered no timetable.

John Zogby, president of the opinion-polling firm Zogby International, said the photos would confirm negative views of the United States held by most Arabs.

"I have heard it said this will hurt our image in the Arab world. But I don't think anything can hurt our image in the Arab world anymore," he said.

"The war in Iraq and the embrace

of (Israeli Prime Minister Ariel) Sharon's plan for Gaza and the West Bank have done serious damage to our relations with the Arab world, not only our diplomatic relations but with the public," Zogby said.

Pictures apparently showing British soldiers abusing Iraqis were published in London on Saturday, further inflaming the situation. The Saudi cabinet Monday called the abuse portrayed by both American and British forces "inhuman and degrading."

A-Jamri said the abuses would make it difficult for governments in the region to support the U.S. democracy initiative.

"For those seeking another vision for the Middle East, they find it very difficult to put Iraq forward and say, 'We are offering an alternative to Saddam Hussein's way,'" he said. "This looks to the Arab people like their governments succumbing to the Israelis and the Americans."

"It's dominating the talk of the region," he said.

Some military officers and journalists suggested the British photos, including a soldier apparently urinating on a hooded Iraqi prisoner, were fakes. If so, it will take considerable

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# U.S. chief of prisons decides to lessen prison population

Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller has also decided to stop using hoods to cover the faces of detainees in Iraq

By Evan Osno  
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Vowing to fix Iraq's troubled detention and interrogation system, the new U.S. chief of prisons in Iraq said Tuesday that he has suspended the widespread practice of placing hoods over detainees' heads and that he intends to significantly reduce the population at the main prison.

Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller headed the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, until he was transferred to Iraq a month ago to repair mistakes uncovered by a widening

investigation into abuse at the U.S.-run Abu Ghraib prison west of Baghdad.

With Iraq and the rest of the Arab world seething over photographs publicized last week showing naked prisoners with bags over their heads being humiliated by U.S. guards, Miller quietly ordered a ban Friday on placing hoods on Iraqi prisoners. On Arab television and in newspapers, the image of prisoners in dark hoods has become among the most potent and ubiquitous symbol of the U.S.-led occupation, shorthand for the system of raids and arrests that Iraqis deeply resent.

"We just made the decision we did not want to use that technique," Miller said Tuesday in interviews with a group of reporters in Baghdad. "I believe (the hood) sends a message we do not want to send to the civilian population."

Miller said he plans to reduce the population at Abu Ghraib from 3,800 to less than 2,000 in coming months. Coalition officials have been increasingly eager to slash Iraq's prison population as a measure of goodwill to dampen rising antipathy toward the occupation.

Once used by Saddam Hussein as a site of torture and executions, Abu Ghraib became the central U.S. detention facility for insurgents and foreign fighters.

At times over the past year, it has been overcrowded, which has been cited by military investigators as a factor in failures of oversight that contributed to abuse.

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