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Details Of Army's Abuse Investigation Surface

Pentagon source: Photos may show soldiers, Iraqi detainees

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Sources have revealed new details from the Army's criminal investigation into reports of abuse of Iraqi detainees, including the location of the suspected crimes and evidence that is being sought.

U.S. soldiers reportedly posed for photographs with partially unclothed Iraqi prisoners, a Pentagon official told CNN on Tuesday.

A second source confirmed that the Army's Criminal Investigation Division has focused on these pictures, which may depict male and female soldiers.

Investigators have not determined whether any photographs had been taken or had been seen by anyone, but several military police have been removed from duty until the matter is resolved, the source said.

In addition, a senior Pentagon official said the investigation is focused on Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, which had been notorious for torture of Iraqis during the regime of captured Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

"If it happened, it's criminal activity," the official said. It is not clear, he said, if there were witnesses to the alleged events.

The official also confirmed there are "credible reports" that there may be photographs of the alleged abuse.

The official said it is not believed that the reports indicate widespread criminal abuse, but that the "nature" of the reports have caused concern in the Pentagon and at U.S. Central Command.

"There is zero tolerance" for abuse, he said. "One case is one too many."

Prisoners held by the United States in Iraq are held in accordance with guidelines established by the Geneva Conventions.

Those guidelines include the right of dignity and to be kept from public ridicule.

One source indicated that taking pictures of the prisoners would be considered criminal activity unless it could be demonstrated they were taken for official reasons related to the processing and handling of detainees.

The Pentagon official said computer hard drives have been seized by the Criminal Investigation Division in its search for photographs and additional evidence of abuse.

The official underscored what others in the Pentagon and Baghdad have said in recent days, which is that the matter is considered serious.

The official that the Army is deeply concerned about possible problems of "poor discipline, poor leadership, and a need for re-training," in the military police community.

Several officials say they cannot come to any conclusion about the matter until the investigation is complete but reiterate that Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, head of coalition forces in Iraq, is taking the matter seriously and is concerned.

The investigation has drawn attention in the military since it came to light January 16.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has been briefed on the investigation, officials said.

Sanchez ordered the Army's Criminal Investigation Division to probe the matter as soon as he was told about the reports, sources said.

The official described Sanchez as "plunging in" when he learned of the matter.

The criminal investigations commander, Maj. Gen. Donald Ryder, also serves as the provost marshal general of the Army. That position makes him the most senior Army military police officer. Ryder may have to investigate those police as part of the probe. Ryder traveled to Baghdad late last year, according to aides, to review the treatment of detainees.

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DETAINEE TREATMENT INVESTIGATION

BAGHDAD, Iraq – An investigation has been initiated into reported incidents of detainee abuse at a Coalition Forces detention facility. The release of specific information concerning the incidents could hinder the investigation, which is in its early stages. The investigation will be conducted in a thorough and professional manner. The Coalition is committed to treating all persons under its control with dignity, respect and humanity. Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, the Commanding General, has reiterated this requirement to all members of CJTF-7.

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PROPOSED RESPONSE TO QUERY
AR 15-6 Investigation**

STATEMENT: As announced on Jan. 16, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, Commander JTF-7, initiated a criminal investigation into allegations of detainee abuse at a Coalition internment facility in Iraq. The Criminal Investigation Command is conducting that investigation. Additionally, Lt. Gen. Sanchez requested an overall investigation of detainee operations to assess all aspects of handling detainees and enemy prisoners of war. U.S. Central Command directed the Coalition Forces Land Component Command to conduct the investigation. An investigation team will examine training conducted by units assigned responsibilities at detention facilities, and the enforcement of standards and camp conditions. This investigation is a prudent measure to determine if there are systemic issues that need to be addressed to enhance ongoing detention operations and is not the result of any single incident or allegation.

RESPONSE TO QUERY:

Q. Who is conducting the investigation?

A. An impartial team from the Coalition Forces Land Component Command will conduct the AR 15-6 investigation, consisting of a general officer, legal advisors and subject matter experts. (IF ASKED about the subject matter experts: Among the team will be noncommissioned officers and officers with experience and expertise – doctrinal and training -- in internment and detention facilities.)

Q. Is Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba the investigating officer? Can I talk with him?

A. Yes; however, he has declined any comments until the investigation is completed.

Q. If units are preparing to redeploy, will they be forced to remain in theater?

A. Although possible, the question is speculative since the investigation is not completed.

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Q. Didn't the Provost Marshal General, Maj. Gen. Ryder visit the detention facilities already? What did he find as a result of his visits?

A. Yes, the PMG did visit Iraq on two occasions in the last year for a number of reasons, which included visiting detention facilities to look at many overarching issues to include physical structures, workspaces, and manning levels, not to mention the review of other military police operations in theater.

It's important to note that the PMG is a staff officer, not a Commander of MP forces or detention facilities. He does not "manage" the day-to-day detention operations. The officers who run the facilities work for the CJTF-7 Commander, LTG Sanchez. The PMG provides functional expertise and technical assistance, but does not "direct" operation of any facilities. Such responsibility rests with the Combatant Commander and subordinate CJTF Commanders.

Q. Can I get the results of the CID investigation into the allegations of detainee abuse?

A. The CID criminal investigation remains ongoing. It's the policy of the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command not to release preliminary information on allegations of wrongdoing, or information concerning open criminal investigations to protect the integrity of those investigations. Generally, CID case information is releasable after cases are closed, referred to "commanders" for disposition, and disciplinary action has been completed. It's important to note that an allegation of wrongdoing or the fact that an investigation has been opened does not necessarily in and of itself imply guilt or innocence. Decisions concerning actions taken in the form of charges if deemed appropriate by commanders will be released from CJTF-7 in Baghdad.

Q. In reference to Maj. Gen. Ryder's visits, is there a conflict of interest with the investigative process since the PMG is dual hatted as the Commander of CID?

A. No. The PMG is not the "operational commander" of the Army's military police. He is the "technical expert" advising senior Army and DoD leadership on matters dealing with Army Law Enforcement.

Maj. Gen. Ryder is on the Army Staff and does not "own" if you will, or command military police units other than the Army's Criminal Investigation Command. He does not "manage" day-to-day operations of military police. The PMG provides technical and policy

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support at the Department of the Army level to installation Provost Marshals through the Major Army Commands.

Q. What is an AR 15-6 Investigation?

A. An Army Regulation 15-6 investigation can be initiated for a variety of reasons. These investigations are administrative (rather than criminal) in nature and focus on a particular set of facts and circumstances surrounding an issue of concern to the chain of command.

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