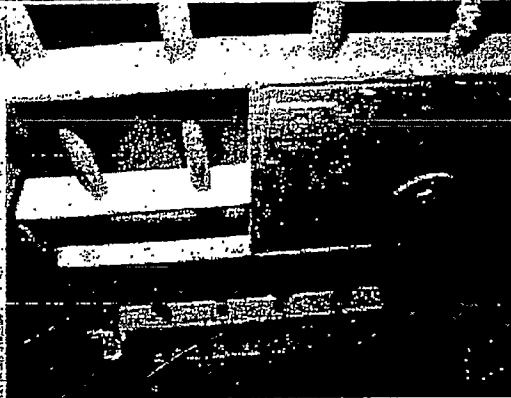


NIGHTLY NEWS WITH TOM BROKAW

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New Iraqi prison scandal?

May 20: NBC News has exclusive information on what could be another prison scandal in Iraq. NBC's Campbell Brown has the details.

Nightly News

By Campbell Brown

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NBC News

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BAGHDAD - With attention focused on the seven soldiers charged with abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison, U.S. military and intelligence officials familiar with the situation tell NBC News the Army's elite Delta Force is now the subject of a Pentagon inspector general investigation into abuse against detainees.

The target is a top-secret site near Baghdad's airport. The battlefield interrogation facility known as the "BIF" is pictured in satellite photos.

According to two top U.S. government sources, it is the scene of the most egregious violations of the Geneva Conventions in all of

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Iraq's prisons. A place where the normal rules of interrogation don't apply, Delta Force's BIF only holds Iraqi insurgents and suspected terrorists — but not the most wanted among Saddam's lieutenants pictured on the deck of cards.

These sources say the prisoners there are hooded from the moment they are captured. They are kept in tiny dark cells. And in the BIF's six interrogation rooms, Delta Force soldiers routinely drug prisoners, hold a prisoner under water until he thinks he's drowning, or smother them almost to suffocation.

In Washington Thursday evening, a senior Pentagon official denied allegations of prisoner abuse at Battlefield Interrogation Facilities operated by Delta Force in Iraq. And he said the tactics described in this report are not used in those facilities.

All of those practices would be violations of the Geneva Conventions. The conventions do not apply to stateless terrorists — the so-called non-enemy combatants like al-Qaida suspects caught by the United States in Afghanistan.

But as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has made clear, the Geneva Conventions do apply in Iraq.

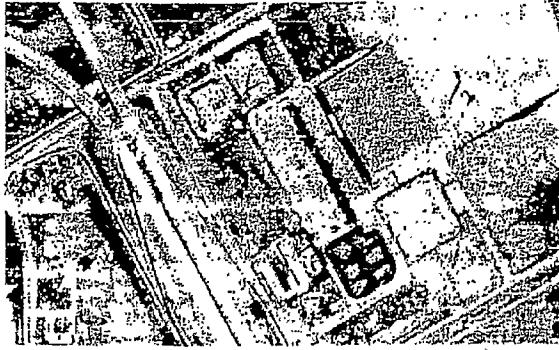
"Iraq's a nation. The United States is a nation. The Geneva Conventions applied. They have applied every single day from the outset," Rumsfeld has said.

So, does Rumsfeld know about the BIF and what goes on there?

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Digital Globe / Digital Globe
Baghdad airport

Several top U.S. military and intelligence sources say yes, and that he, through other top Pentagon officials, directed the U.S. head of intelligence in Iraq, Gen. Barbara Fast, and others to bring some of the methods used at the BIF to prisons like Abu Ghraib, in hopes of

getting better intelligence from Iraqi detainees.

The Pentagon's top spokesman in Iraq says the military will not comment on the BIF or what goes on there. He was unwilling to even confirm or deny its existence. Gen. Fast declined our request for an interview due to the ongoing prison abuse investigation, one that has so far yielded charges against only the military's lowest ranks.

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