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Abu Ghraib, Satanists, And Spoon-Benders

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**Abu Ghraib, Satanists,
And Spoon-Benders
by Edward Spannaus**

In a legal battle currently raging in Federal court in New York, the Pentagon is desperately trying to block the release of more photos and videotapes of prisoner abuse and torture at Abu Ghraib. At issue, in the lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Physicians for Human Rights, Veterans for Common Sense, and others, are 87 photographs and four videotapes, which are reported to contain images of rape, sodomy, and other conduct far more horrendous even than that which has been disclosed so far.

The question raised, is what connection does this have to the reports received by EIR that the Special Warfare crowd based at Fort Bragg, N.C., is deeply enmeshed in "spoon-bender" Mind War programs and experimentation, and intersects outright Satanic circles?

`Rape and Murder'

An examination of this question, should proceed in the light of recent hearings in the U.S. Senate, and the explosive New Yorker magazine article by investigative reporter Jane Mayer, which have further documented that prisoner abuse and torture was a deliberate, systematic policy, one that came from the very top of the Defense Department, and also that these practices were deliberately introduced into Iraq, after having first been tried at Guantanamo.

It may seem far-fetched to some readers, to suggest a link between the torture scandals, and Satanic pedophile rings that operated out of the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco, or around Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska. But consider the following:

When Defense Secretary Rumsfeld testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee in May 2004, he warned that the unreleased Abu Ghraib images were far worse than those that had come out so far, saying that they show acts "that can only be described as blatantly sadistic, cruel and inhumane." Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said, after the Senate hearings, that "we're talking about rape and murder here."

Other, shaken members of Congress who viewed the photos said they showed, among other things, naked prisoners being forced into sexual acts with one another.

In an affidavit filed last month in the ACLU case, but only recently unsealed, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard Myers, painted a stark picture of what could happen if the photos and videos, known as the "Darby photos," were released. Official release of the photos "will pose a clear and grave risk of inciting violence and riots against American troops and coalition forces," Myers said, and could result in "increased terrorist recruitment."

"Release of these images will be portrayed as part and parcel of the alleged, continuing effort of the United States to humiliate Muslims," Myers added.

Now, listen to investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, who first broke the Abu Ghraib story in April 2004, and who said the following, when speaking to an ACLU event in July 2004:

"Some of the worst things that happened you don't know about, okay? Videos, um, there are women there. Some of you may have read that they were passing letters out, communications out to their men. This is at Abu Ghraib. . . . The women were passing messages out saying 'Please come and kill me, because of what's happened' and basically what happened is that those women who were arrested with young boys, children in cases that have been recorded. The boys were sodomized with the cameras rolling. And the worst above all of that is the soundtrack of the boys shrieking that your government has. They are in total terror."

Additionally, former prisoners from Abu Ghraib have given U.S. military investigators detailed descriptions of the rape of a boy prisoner at Abu Ghraib by an American soldier, and have described other types of abuse of children there.

At this point, the reader may rightly be asking him or herself: "How is it possible, that members of the U.S. military could be involved in such hideous practices?"

'Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape'

Although her article does not explicitly raise these deeper questions, Jane Mayer's July 11 New Yorker article, "The Experiment," present a compelling case that the techniques of sexual and religious humiliation of prisoners, as well as most of the other techniques used at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, were developed by behavioral scientists and others associated with the U.S. military, and that study of such techniques is regularly used in the training of military personnel to resist interrogation if captured by enemy forces.

Rumsfeld sent Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller to take command of the Guantanamo prison camp in November 2002, since Rumsfeld believed that the previous commander was not getting adequate results from interrogations. It was Miller, said to be part of the "spoon-bender" set, and also of like mind with the Muslim-hating Gen. William Boykin, who established the role of psychologists and psychiatrists in assisting interrogations, as part of the Behavioral Science Consultation Teams (BSCT, or "biscuits").

The BSCT program operates under Military Intelligence, and many of its members have undergone training in the resistance program known as

SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape). SERE reportedly involves subjecting trainees to extreme temperatures, sensory deprivation including confinement in small spaces, loud noises, sexual embarrassment and humiliation, and what is called "religious dilemma"—including the desecration of the Bible.

Shortly after Miller arrived at Guantanamo, FBI agents assigned to Guantanamo raised objections to the use of SERE techniques in interrogations of prisoners, and they raised their concerns directly to Miller, according to FBI documents disclosed in the ACLU lawsuit.

Later, in August 2003, Miller was sent to Iraq by Rumsfeld's Undersecretary for Intelligence Stephen Cambone, and Cambone's assistant Boykin. Miller visited Abu Ghraib and the "hunter-killer" squad then known as Task Force 20; his express purpose was to "Gitmo-ize" detention and interrogation programs in Iraq. As he put it in his report summarizing his visit, he went to Iraq "to discuss current theatre ability to rapidly exploit interneers for actionable intelligence."

His best-known recommendation was that of using detention operations (e.g., MPs serving as prison guards) to "set conditions for successful interrogations." Less well known, is that Miller also recommended providing a BSCT "to support interrogation operations," explaining: "These teams comprised of operational behavioral psychologists and psychiatrists are essential in developing integrated interrogation strategies and assessing interrogation intelligence production."

`Reverse Engineering'

According to Mayer, the flagship SERE program is based at the JFK Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, and the training program is overseen by psychologists and other behavioral science clinicians, who keep detailed records of trainees' responses and stress levels. Since the program is ostensibly intended to expose trainees to maximum anxiety in order to better equip them to resist interrogation and torture, the program is, Mayer reports, "a storehouse of knowledge about coercive methods of interrogation." Mayer continues:

"One way to stimulate acute anxiety, SERE scientists have learned, is to create an environment of radical uncertainty: trainees are hooded; their sleep patterns are disrupted; they are starved for extended periods; they are stripped of their clothes; they are exposed to extreme temperatures," and so on. If a POW "is trying to avoid revealing secrets to enemy interrogators, he is much less likely to succeed if he has been deprived of sleep or is struggling to avoid intense pain."

Or, as Mayer put it in an interview posted on the New Yorker website: "Before 9/11, many of these behavioral scientists [at Guantanamo] were affiliated with SERE schools, where they used their knowledge to train U.S. soldiers to resist coercive interrogations. But since 9/11, several sources told me, these same behavioral scientists began to `reverse engineer' the process. Instead of teaching resistance, they used their skills to help overcome resistance in U.S.-held detainees."

One of those identified in the Mayer article, as playing an important role at Guantanamo, is Col. Morgan Banks, the director of the Psychological Applications Directorate of the Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg. Banks recommended that the psychologists working with the BSCTs at Guantanamo, have backgrounds with SERE.

Gitmo, the Laboratory

During the controversy over the Newsweek story about desecration of the Koran, a former U.S. military officer wrote to Prof. Juan Cole (who runs the anti-war "Informed Comment" web blog) and described his own experiences at SERE school, which had a mock POW camp for training CI (counterintelligence) personnel, interrogators, etc. "One of the most memorable parts of the camp experience was when one of the camp leaders trashed a Bible on the ground, kicking it around, etc.," the ex-officer wrote. "It was a crushing blow, even though this was just a school. I have no doubt that the stories about trashing the Koran are true."

"I'm sure you must realize that Gitmo must be being used as a 'laboratory' for all these psychological manipulation techniques by the CI guys," he continued, calling this "absolutely sickening." Sexual humiliation and ridicule, involving stripping trainees naked, and having women laugh at the size of the men's genitals, is part of the advanced SERE training. (And they still claim that 19-year-old Lynndie England thought this up, all by herself.)

Mayer was told about another SERE training technique called the "mock rape," in which a female officer stands behind a screen and screams as if she were being violated, and the trainee is told that he can stop the rape if he cooperates with his captors.

At Abu Ghraib, they seem to have dropped the "mock" part.

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