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Report Gives New Detail on Approval of Brutal Techniques

By [BRIAN KNOWLTON](#)

WASHINGTON — A newly declassified Congressional report released Tuesday outlined the most detailed evidence yet that the military's use of harsh [interrogation methods](#) on terrorism suspects was approved at high levels of the Bush administration.

The report focused solely on interrogations carried out by the military, not those conducted by the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) at its secret prisons overseas. It rejected claims by former Defense Secretary [Donald H. Rumsfeld](#) and others that Pentagon policies played no role in harsh treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq or other military facilities.

The 232-page report, the product of an 18-month inquiry, was approved on Nov. 20 by the Senate Armed Services Committee, but has since been under Pentagon review for declassification. Some of the findings were made public in a [Dec. 12 article](#) in The New York Times; a spokesman for Mr. Rumsfeld dismissed the report at the time as "unfounded allegations against those who have served our nation."

The Senate report documented how some of the techniques used by the military at prisons in Afghanistan and at the naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, as well as in Iraq — stripping detainees, placing them in "stress positions" or depriving them of sleep — originated in a military program known as Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape, or SERE, intended to train American troops to resist abusive enemy interrogations.

According to the Senate investigation, a military behavioral scientist and a colleague who had witnessed SERE training proposed its use at Guantánamo in October 2002, as pressure was rising "to get 'tougher' with detainee interrogations." Officers there sought authorization, and Mr. Rumsfeld approved 15 interrogation techniques.

The report showed that Mr. Rumsfeld's authorization was cited by a United States military special-operations lawyer in Afghanistan as "an analogy and basis for use of these techniques," and that, in February 2003, a special-operations unit in Iraq obtained a copy of the policy from Afghanistan "that included aggressive techniques, changed the letterhead, nytimes.com/2009/04/.../22report.ht...

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the policy from Afghanistan “that included aggressive techniques, changed the letterhead, and adopted the policy verbatim.”

Months later, the report said, the interrogation officer in charge at Abu Ghraib obtained a copy of that policy “and submitted it, virtually unchanged, through her chain of command.” This ultimately led to authorization by Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez of the use of stress positions, “sleep management” and military dogs to exploit detainees’ fears, the report said.

“The paper trail on abuse leads to top civilian leaders, and our report connects the dots,” Senator [Carl Levin](#), Democrat of Michigan, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said on Tuesday in a conference call with reporters. “This report, in great detail, shows a paper trail going from that authorization” by Mr. Rumsfeld “to Guantánamo to Afghanistan and to Iraq,” Mr. Levin said.

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