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Presenter: Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George Casey Tuesday, May 4, 2004 2:00 p.m. EDT

Special Defense Department Briefing

(Also participating; Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, Chief of Staff Army Reserve, Lt. Gen. Paul T. Mikolashek, Inspector General, Maj. Gen. Michael Marchand, Deputy Staff Judge Advocate, Maj. Gen. Donald Ryder, Provost Marshal General)

COLONEL JOSEPH CURTIN: Good afternoon, everybody. Colonel Joe Curtin, Army Public Affairs. Just a second -- I'll introduce General George Casey, vice chief of staff of the Army. He's going to read a short statement today, and for about 10 to 15 minutes we'll take your questions. He has another meeting following on to this, so I ask you to respect that one ground rule.

General Casey. Sir.

GEN. CASEY: Thank you. Good afternoon. Let me introduce my colleagues here. General Pete T. Mikolashek is our inspector general. It is he who has been charged by Secretary Brownlee to do the holistic look at Army detainee policies and procedures across the Army. He's just two weeks back from Iraq. Investigation is not complete, but he's here, could possibly provide some insights.

Lieutenant General Ron Helmly, the chief of our Army Reserve.

Major General Mike Marchand, our deputy staff judge advocate, and Major General Don Ryder, our provost marshal general, who was involved early on in providing an assessment report to General Sanchez on the Iraqi prison system, which included a visit to Abu Ghraib in October.

So I'd like just to make a few comments here on the disturbing reports that show the inhumane treatment of Iraqi detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison facility. Then I'll take a few of your questions.

First of all, we in the Army are extremely disappointed that anyone would engage in the mistreatment and humiliation of detainees or take such pictures. The United States Army is a values-based organization that respects the International Law of Armed Conflict and human dignity. The behavior that led to these images that you see is clearly unacceptable, and it is not reflective of Army training or Army values. It is a complete breakdown in discipline.

We in the Army are committed to treating all persons with dignity, respect and humanity. All of our soldiers recognize that they have a moral and a legal obligation to provide humane treatment to the personnel in our custody. We expect no less.

Secondly, the Army takes all allegations of detainee mistreatment very seriously. As you heard earlier, CJTF-7 immediately investigated these allegations in January after they were brought to the attention of the chain of command by a concerned soldier. Thus far, as a result of the investigation, six soldiers have been charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and two senior leaders have been removed from their duties.

Third, the acting secretary of the Army has also directed a complete assessment of the Army's internment, detention and interrogation policies, practices and procedures. Our inspector general began the inspection in February with trips to our predeployment training in the United States, and then trips to Afghanistan and Iraq. We will complete the inspection later this month, and we continue to look for ways to improve our detainee operations.

Lastly, today we have over 300,000 men and women from the Army deployed around the world, performing superbly in defense of this country and the values that make it great. Our commanders have and will continue to investigate all allegations of detainee mistreatment and take appropriate action. I have every confidence that our commanders will continue to set appropriate climate and standards with regard to the humane treatment of detainees, consistent with our history and consistent with our values.

Thanks. I'll take your questions. Go ahead.

Q General Casey, are the seven new discipline cases among those recommended by Taguba? And is Colonel Pappas among those being reprimanded or relieved of duty?

GEN. CASEY: I'm not quite sure what you're -- what seven you're referring to. There are six personnel who have been charged.

Q I think there was one that was administrative, I believe.

GEN. CASEY: There are six who have been charged and have their charges being processed for trial by court-martial. There are a number of others who have received administrative action, general officer letters of reprimand, as a result of that investigation and as a result of the investigation that General Taguba conducted.

Q General?

Q General, there was a Colonel Pappas involved in the 215th Military Intelligence Unit. Can you tell us anything about what happened to him?

GEN. CASEY: Colonel Pappas was the military intelligence brigade commander. To the best of my knowledge, all of the military intelligence personnel who have been -- may have been part of this incident, their action is being held pending completion of what we call the Procedure 15 investigation, which is an investigation mandated by executive order when there is suspicions of intel misconduct or misconduct in the conduct of intel activities.

Q Well, can you say whether Colonel Pappas is still commanding the 205th MI Brigade?

GEN. CASEY: To the best of my knowledge, he is.

Q And General Karpinski's still with the 800th? She's still commanding the 800th?

GEN. CASEY: She is still in command of the 800th. Her unit has returned to the States. I'm told that she is on leave pending demobilization next month.

Q Sir, I have two questions. Could you tell us the senior -- or the officers who have been relieved of duty and why? And would you also tell us if you think that your discipline of your troops with regard to observing the tenets of the Geneva Convention and treatment of prisoners is undermined by the Pentagon policy not to apply the Geneva Convention to security detainees in Iraq?

GEN. CASEY: Yeah. The short answer is no. And I just pulled out here a couple of -- I'll read you a couple of lines out of our standing Army regulation that comes to -- that talks about detention operations, to give you an idea that this -- it's very basic for us, how we treat detainees and how we treat all of the folks we come in contact with, with dignity and respect.

But it talks about -- all personnel captured, detained will be given humanitarian care and treatment from the moment they fall into the hands of U.S. forces. First -- that's the exact -- the first paragraph.

Inhumane treatment of internees is prohibited. All personnel will receive humane treatment without regard to race, nationality, religion, et cetera. All personnel will be respected as human beings. Photographing, filming and videotaping of detainees other than for internal facility administration is prohibited.

I mean -- so, the answer is no. We know how to do our business. We know how it should be done. And what happened at that prison, as I said, is a complete breach of discipline.

Q Can we get a copy of that document you were just reading?

GEN. CASEY: Sure.

Q Okay, General Casey, I have a question for you, and if I could also ask a question of General Ryder over there.

First, six people being charged. It seems like the list of -- if you read through this Taguba report, the list of things that happened there -- people being thrown off trucks, people having sex with the detainees -- I mean, it seems like a laundry list of things that could not have been carried out by six people. Are there a lot more folks that are being looked at, and do you think this extends beyond just six individuals?

GEN. CASEY: The investigation is continuing, and we will continue it until we are satisfied that we have absolutely gotten to the bottom of this. As far as looking at what happened to this person vice what happened to that person, that's a judgment that's made by the commanders in the field after reviewing all of the evidence that's available.

Q And do you mind if I ask General Ryder a question?

GEN. CASEY: Let's come back to that, if we have some time.

Here, go ahead in the back.

Q General, from what you understand and what your staff understands, do any of the allegations involve treatment of female and/or juvenile detainees who were kept at the prison facility?

GEN. CASEY: I don't know of any involving juveniles, and I'm looking over at Don Ryder --

GEN. RYDER: Yes, sir. The current investigation does not indicate any females.

GEN. CASEY: The answer is the current investigation does not indicate that there were any females involved in this inhumane treatment.

Q No females, no juveniles.

Q There was one of the plaintiffs here said a male MP guard had sex with a female detainee. This was marked "secret" here, with a big "S" next to it. Isn't that -- doesn't that undercut what you just said, if an MP had sex with a female detainee?

GEN. CASEY: Yeah, and I don't know -- go ahead, Don.

GEN. RYDER: Yes, sir. The only way I could address that is the current investigation that is ongoing is not talking to that issue. If, in fact, that did take place, our investigation will uncover it and we'll investigate it very, very thoroughly.

Q But he said that it did take place.

Q Why wouldn't you look into that?

GEN. RYDER: I didn't say we would not. I said we would look at it. We will look at that.

GEN. CASEY: As I said, we will look at everything. I guess what he's telling you is there's not now that on the table. Go ahead.

Q The six soldiers who are facing courts martial, did they have any previous disciplinary actions in the military, or out in their civilian jobs? Any charges? I understand two of them were penal workers at some point.

GEN. CASEY: I understand that to be the case as well. I don't have any information on their background other than that.

Q Could you describe their rank and -- and will you release the charge sheet --

GEN. CASEY: I don't know that we will release the charge sheets. But I think -- you've seen there's a -- on the 20th there was a release from CJTF-7 that said that these individuals were charged with conspiracy, dereliction of duty, assault, maltreatment and indecent acts.

Q What about rank?

GEN. CASEY: There are two sergeants and four specialists or privates.

Q And have you identified them? Have you -- have you seen any names?

GEN. CASEY: No. I don't know that we have specifically --

Q Why don't you release their names? Because in the past, typically, people who are facing Article 32, or particularly after they've had an Article 32, which is in the case of some of these, we are told the names of people who are facing criminal charges.

GEN. CASEY: The Article 32 investigations are about half-done in the six cases, and those that are done have not had final action taken on it by the convening authority as yet. So they have not been --

Q There could be four Article 32s that have taken place. We are usually given the names of people who are facing serious --

GEN. CASEY: That's -- that's been my experience in the past. I just don't know if we have actually released those names. I don't think we have. We will continue to follow our normal -- our policy here.

Q General?

GEN. CASEY: Go ahead.

Q I apologize over -- while I was late if you've already addressed this. But besides stopping the practice of using hoods on the detainees, can you give us other specific examples of what changes have been made to safeguard or prevent something similar from happening again?

GEN. CASEY: Yeah. Let me -- let me kind of give you a run-down on all of the things that have been accomplished.

First of all, there's new unit leadership at Abu Ghraib. And there is close coordination, I'm told, between the military intelligence brigade commander and the military police brigade commander. On the 15th of April, as the secretary mentioned, Major General Jeff Miller took charge of all of the detainee operations in Iraq. So you now have one single person who is responsible for all the detainee activities.

Secondly, additional training on the Geneva Convention and the rules of engagement have been given to all of the new units that have gone into these facilities.

Third, General Sanchez asked and we have provided a mobile training team of corrections and legal experts, basically to specialized and confinement operations. There are 24 corrections specialists on the ground now working at the detention facilities and helping to train the soldiers and to improve the quality of the operations there at those facilities.

I've already mentioned the Secretary of the Army's investigation that's ongoing. Again, that is a holistic look at detainee operations across the Army.

The next thing that we're doing is there's a very significant lessons-learned process, as you can imagine. These lessons are going back to our schools and being incorporated into changes to our doctrine, and they're also going out to our combat training centers, where we do the rehearsal exercises for the forces that are going into Iraq. So these lessons will all be internalized in the way we do business.

Last point -- if I might, last point:

Several years ago the Army realized that we were going to need additional internment and resettlement units. And so, as part of our internal reorganization, we had already planned to stand up three new active-duty units. And so -- I know we've talked to you about the active component/Reserve component balance. We're pulling some of these units into the active component. So we're increasing our capability to do these types of operations.

Q Well, how many more soldiers can you say -- have you added to Abu Ghraib? Because the report says one of the problems is you have one battalion covering 6,000 or 7,000 prisoners, and usually one battalion should cover 4,000 prisoners.

GEN. CASEY: Yeah.

Q So how many more soldiers, if any, are at Abu Ghraib now?

GEN. CASEY: I don't know the specifics on that.

Q Are you adding more, or have you not? Do you know?

GEN. CASEY: I don't know that there have been additional forces added. The 800th Military Police

Brigade, which was in charge and has just left, had a total of seven battalions in it. And so there may have been some internal reshuffling that could have been done to alleviate some of that burden. I will have to get back to you with the specific numbers that are at Abu Ghraib now.

Q General, are there credible allegations of abuse by U.S. forces against Iraqis at other prisons in Iraq? And if so, what's the nature of the alleged abuse? And are charges possible in other prisons?

GEN. CASEY: As I said, we take maltreatment of detainees very seriously, and we thoroughly investigate every allegation. Allegations can come from Iraqis. They can come from soldiers. They can come from members of the chain of command.

Since December of '02, there have been a total of 35 CID investigations into allegations of detainee misconduct across the theater, Afghanistan and Iraq. Not all of those have been substantiated, but that gives you an idea of the --

Q (Off mike.)

GEN. CASEY: Don, can you help me out on that?

GEN. RYDER: Sure. Right now, of the 35, there are 25 that are death investigations. Let me make sure everybody understands what I mean about a death investigation. Whenever there's a death investigation -- whenever there's a death, we will investigate it, whatever it is.

So in the 25 death investigations, you have 12 of those that are undetermined or natural. A detainee in custody had a heart attack. Autopsy was performed, and we saw that.

So that's the magnitude of those 35 investigations over the past -- since General Casey said, since December of '02.

Q How about the other 10, then?

Q So instead of -- (inaudible) -- there are 13 what?

GEN. RYDER: Well, then there are 13 others.

Q That are still being investigated or --

GEN. RYDER: Ten others that are still being investigated, ongoing investigations. And we'll continue to do those investigations.

Q How are the --

Q Well, what about the --

(Cross talk.)

GEN. CASEY: Twenty-five and 10.

GEN. RYDER: Twenty-five and 10.

Q I think you're --

(Cross talk.)

GEN. CASEY: Okay.

Q Can we just finish --

Q We've got to go back --

Q Can we just finish with the numbers, please?

Q Yeah.

Q Okay. Twelve, you said, are undetermined or natural.

GEN. RYDER: Correct.

(Cross talk.)

Q The remaining 13 are --

GEN. RYDER: And then there are three -- there are two homicides and one death of a justifiable -- what we're calling justifiable homicide. That was an escape, and an Iraqi was killed there.

Q And -- okay, but you said that overall there have been 35 ongoing, and by my math, we --

GEN. CASEY: No.

Q No?

GEN. CASEY: There are 35 total.

GEN. RYDER: Total.

Q That have happened.

GEN. RYDER: Correct.

Q And so you've accounted for 28 of them?

GEN. : Twenty-five.

Q Twenty-five.

Q Twenty-five dead.

Q So we have a balance of 10. The other 10.

(Cross talk.)

GEN. RYDER: I may --

Q Of course CID --

GEN. RYDER: Yeah, 10 more ongoing CID investigations that are not deaths.

Q Can you characterize those in any way?

GEN. RYDER: Abuse, assaults.

Q And just to be clear on the two homicides, were those the cases that were investigated in Afghanistan?

GEN. CASEY: No, they were not.

Q Can you say anything about those two --

(Cross talk.)

GEN. CASEY: One in Afghanistan, one in Iraq.

(Cross talk.)

Q And the homicides -- can we clear that up? The homicides -- is this detainee on detainee, or is it guard on detainee? Can you clarify in any way?

GEN. RYDER: In custody, a U.S. soldier -- and then an Iraqi death.

Q Okay.

Q Are the 10 all in Iraq or Afghanistan -- the 10 remaining?

GEN. RYDER: The 10 remaining are -- if I recall, are all in Iraq. I will clarify the numbers back for you. We'll get back the numbers for you.

Q And these are all Army, right? Just Army? Correct?

GEN. RYDER: No, there's one other government employee -- other government agency.

Q Okay. As long as he's up there, can I ask that question I wanted to ask earlier?

GEN. CASEY (?): Okay. Great. Stay here.

Q (Laughs.)

Q General Ryder, can I -- I'm just going to stop you from having to go back up again.

Q Moving on --

Q I just want to be sure I don't misunderstand something in General Taguba's report. There seemed to be conflict between some of what you thought when you investigated and what General Miller thought about the role of military police and sort of preparing the environment for military intelligence. Can you talk to us a little bit about that, how you feel about what the role of a military police officer should be in preparing the environment for an interrogation?

GEN. RYDER: Sure. First let me clarify, it was not an inspection or an investigation when I went over in October. It was on the request of General Sanchez to do an assessment. It was an assessment of the Iraqi penal system. It was an assessment to see if the Iraqi penal system was moving along so they could then -- the Iraqis could then take over this system and incarcerate their own criminals, incarcerate Iraqi criminals, and how it was working with the Coalition Provisional Authority to get to that point. So that was the focus. The focus obviously brought me to Abu Ghraib because at Abu Ghraib you have the Baghdad correctional facility that have criminals. That's what brought me to Abu Ghraib.

My recommendations were few to General Sanchez. My recommendations were to ensure that all the detainees at Abu Ghraib were properly separated; that we didn't have a security detainee, a criminal, and then an intelligence detainee mixed together; that they were separated. Another was that we provided the right level of support that we could for the Coalition Provisional Authority until they could get more civilians on to then supervise the Iraqi correctional experts, the correctional folks down in the actual facilities, which was the Coalition Provisional Authority's requirement.

So those were my recommendations. I did make a recommendation that I thought that there was a tension between military police and the interrogators. I did make that --

Q (Off mike) -- just in general.

GEN. RYDER: An in-general report. I thought there was that tension, and that that should be looked at.

Q What does that mean, tension between the two?

GEN. RYDER: The tension between the two is, military police in a correctional environment are there to provide custody and control and a safe and secure environment.

Q And they were being told to do more than that?

GEN. RYDER: I can't say for sure they were. The question was, to me, my view of that. My view as a military police officer for 32 years is that military police in that environment are to provide custody and control and a safe and secure environment and treat folks every day humanely.

Q And so where does that tension come in?

GEN. RYDER: The tension comes in in what we're doing with interrogation.

Q Is there a debate between you and General Miller on that point now, a general debate in the community about the extent to which MPs should enable MI interrogation?

GEN. RYDER: I will not get into the IG's report, but we will look now doctrinely about whether we've got it right of how we do exactly what we're talking about here, with custody and control and interrogation operations.

GEN. CASEY: Thanks.

Q On the two homicides that were mentioned before --

GEN. CASEY: Why don't I just finish up on that. For detention operations and interrogation operations to work efficiently, both play a role.

STAFF: Sir, we have time for one more question --

Q General --

GEN. CASEY: I'm sorry, right down front here.

Q On those two homicides that were mentioned before, were criminal charges brought against U.S. servicemembers in those two cases? And if they haven't been and they're homicides, why haven't they been?

GEN. RYDER: One of the investigations is still ongoing, and the other one criminal charges were brought against the soldier, and those actions have already been taken.

Q General Casey --

Q What were the actions? What were the actions?

Q -- can you address the role of the private contractors? There's a lot of interest in that subject. What role has CACI International played at the prison? And what's the state of this particular interrogator who was singled out in the Taguba report? I think it was Steven Stephanowicz. Has he been fired or is he still on duty?

GEN. CASEY: There were two contractors that were named in the -- in General Taguba's investigation. One worked for Titan. One worked for CACI. One was an interrogator. One was a linguist. To the best of my -- I'm not exactly sure where they are right now, and to the best of my knowledge they are not --

have not been charged with anything.

Q What roles do these companies play? There's some confusion whether they were supervising interrogation? Were they actually doing interrogation or directing MPs? I mean, broadly, what's the --

GEN. CASEY: I don't have any specific insight into what was specifically happening there. I know that contractors do not normally supervise military personnel.

Q What is the legal status of the contractors, the private contractors who are engaged in interrogations or doing that sort of thing in Iraq? Are they covered by U.S. law? Are they covered -- how are they covered?

Q The UCMJ, or --

GEN. CASEY: They are not -- contractors that we have there are not covered under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I am told that if we, in the course of our investigation, feel like charges are warranted, then we take that to the U.S. Attorney and the U.S. Attorney conducts the prosecution.

Q Are they still on the job? Have they been removed by --

GEN. CASEY: I said I didn't know that.

Q The other -- also on military intelligence, are any of those military intelligence officers under criminal investigation? And why did the Army wait so long to initiate the investigation of the military intelligence procedures and --

GEN. CASEY: I don't know that they waited so long. There is a Procedure 15 investigation going on. It was started at the end of April. We expect it will take about another 30 days. General Taguba's report was considered -- I'm sorry, was completed --

Q That involves just one person, the article or the --

Q Procedure.

GEN. CASEY: Procedure 15?

Q Right, Procedure 15.

GEN. CASEY: My understanding is looking broadly at all of the intelligence activities that were part of this incident.

Q That's General Fay's inquiry, sir?

GEN. CASEY: That is General Fay's inquiry. But to your point, the investigation wasn't approved until April 6th. And in that, General Taguba recommended that the Procedure 15 be done and we moved out expeditiously.

Thanks a lot.

Q Thank you.

Q Thanks, General.

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