

Former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld accused of torture

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A US rights group has filed a lawsuit charging former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld with involvement in torturing former prisoners in American prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan.

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) catapulted the torture case into prominence on Thursday after it lodged an appeal to a court in the District of Columbia, alleging that Rumsfeld and some senior US military officials were quite aware of a torture case involving nine detainees between 2002 and 2004 in American prisons in the two countries, AFP reported.

The case initially was brought forth in December 2006, but later on was withdrawn by a federal court in March 2007 on the grounds that the ex-defense secretary and other top American military officials were immune from prosecution.

The US-based human rights group stated that under the Constitution and international law, torture is strictly prohibited and commanders are obliged to act when they know or should have known of such abuses.

The ACLU argued that the 78-year-old Rumsfeld and other military officials were repeatedly notified of abuse and torture at detention facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan by the International Red Cross and other reports as well as complaints by human rights organizations, thus they are directly responsible for the abuses.

The group further touched upon a case involving a prisoner identified as Ali.V, adding that prisoners, who were later released without charge, "were beaten, tortured, and sexually abused."

Meanwhile, three judges at an appeals court in the District of Columbia said the case has a little chance to succeed.

The remarks came as a group of activists, each wearing black hoods and orange jumpsuits representing the prisoners at the US prison camp in Guantanamo Bay staged a rally in front of the court room on Thursday to protest against negligence over the torture case.

Rumsfeld is currently putting finishing touches on the release of his memoir book titled "Known and unknown", which is due to hit bookshelves in the US on 8 February.

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