

More Evidence of US War Crimes

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Military documents obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union after a lengthy lawsuit under the Freedom of Information Act provide important new evidence of American war crimes. The documents include autopsy reports and investigative reports on the deaths of 190 prisoners held by the US military at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The more than 2,600 pages of documents were turned over to the ACLU on January 14 and made public on the organization's web site five days later.

An ACLU statement said that 25 to 30 cases were "unjustified homicides." US military investigators themselves identified many of the deaths as homicides, although there were very few trials or convictions of the soldiers involved.

The ACLU issued a statement declaring: "So far, the documents released by the government raise more questions than they answer, but they do confirm one troubling fact: that no senior officials have been held to account for the widespread abuse of detainees. Without real accountability for these abuses, we risk inviting more abuse in the future."

Some of the deaths are well known cases of atrocities committed by American soldiers, such as the killing of four prisoners who were shot and then thrown into a Baghdad canal in 2007. Others are previously unknown or not widely reported.

The autopsy reports make for gruesome reading. One document details the beating death in 2003 of Abid Mowhosh, a prisoner at Abu Ghraib, the infamous prison outside Baghdad that was the site of the largest number of deaths.

The autopsy report concludes: "This 56-year-old Iraqi detainee died of asphyxia and chest compression. Significant findings of the autopsy included rib fractures and numerous contusions (bruises), some of which were patterned due to impacts with a blunt object..."

Another autopsy report describes the killing of Farhad Mohamed following a military raid in 2004 in Mosul: "This approximately 27-year-old male civilian, presumed Iraqi national, died in US custody approximately 72 hours after being apprehended. By report, physical force was required during his initial apprehension during a raid. During his confinement, he was hooded, sleep deprived and subjected to hot and cold environmental conditions, including the use of cold water on his body and hood."

The young man is described as a "well-developed, well-nourished male," who was six feet

tall and 190 pounds. He died after three days of torture. The techniques described—hooding, sleep deprivation, and some form of waterboarding—are prohibited under the Geneva Conventions. Those who are responsible for his death are guilty of a war crime.

The ACLU highlighted one case in which a sergeant walked into a room where the prisoner was lying wounded “and assaulted him... then shot him twice, thus killing him.” The sergeant then told other soldiers present to lie about the murder. Another soldier, a corporal, subsequently shot the corpse in the head.

According to a summary of the documents carried by CNN, US soldiers were suspects in 43 of the deaths, with the rest due to natural causes, outside attacks on US prisons, or fighting among prisoners. In 13 cases, probable cause for a murder prosecution was found and a total of 19 Americans were convicted of some offense.

The ACLU noted that more than one-quarter of all the deaths were attributed to cardiac problems, although most of the prisoners appeared healthy when first detained. In restrained language, the organization said, “This could potentially raise serious questions about the conditions of confinement or interrogation of the detainees.”

Lt. Col. Tanya Bradsher, a Pentagon spokeswoman, told the press, “The fact that so many autopsies and investigative reports exist indicates the seriousness with which the Department takes its responsibilities regarding detainee treatment and accountability.” By this remarkable logic, the 190 deaths in custody are proof, not of the savagery of American imperialism, but of its humanitarian concern.

Equally remarkable is the response of the American media. As of Sunday afternoon, only six mentions of the ACLU report were logged in a Google News search, of which three were by the Iranian English-language Press TV. There was no mention of the material in the New York Times, the Washington Post or any other television network besides CNN.

The ACLU released the documents one day after a federal appeals court upheld a lower-court ruling that the Obama administration can continue to suppress transcripts in which former prisoners of the CIA now held at Guantanamo Bay describe torture and abuse they suffered while in CIA custody.

These prisoners are being denied their own statements, made to Combatant Status Review Tribunals, the hearings held at Guantanamo to determine whether prisoners are “enemy combatants.” The courts have refused to enforce requests for full transcripts of these hearings, filed under the Freedom of Information Act, the same law used by the ACLU to obtain the prisoner autopsy records.

The documents made public by the ACLU are a devastating exposure of the bloody role of American imperialism in Afghanistan, Iraq and throughout the world. They deserve further study and careful analysis. Along with the hundreds of thousands of documents made public by WikiLeaks, they form the factual basis for a war crimes indictment of the leaders of the American government.

Bush, Cheney & Co., along with their successors Obama and Biden, and all the top military and foreign policy officials who served in both administrations, are guilty of the most serious crimes against humanity. All these officials deserve to face an international war crimes

tribunal.

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