



Documents Show Army Seized Wives As Tactic

Documents Show Army Seized Wives of Suspected Insurgents in Hopes of 'Leveraging' Surrenders

By CHARLES J. HANLEY AP Special Correspondent

The Associated Press

- The U.S. Army in Iraq has at least twice seized and jailed the wives of suspected insurgents in hopes of "leveraging" their husbands into surrender, U.S. military documents show.

In one case, a secretive task force locked up the young mother of a nursing baby, a U.S. intelligence officer reported. In the case of a second detainee, one American colonel suggested to another that they catch her husband by tacking a note to the family's door telling him "to come get his wife."

The issue of female detentions in Iraq has taken on a higher profile since kidnappers seized American journalist Jill Carroll on Jan. 7 and threatened to kill her unless all Iraqi women detainees are freed.

The U.S. military on Thursday freed five of what it said were 11 women among the 14,000 detainees currently held in the 2 1/2-year-old insurgency. All were accused of "aiding terrorists or planting explosives," but an Iraqi government commission found that evidence was lacking.

Iraqi human rights activist Hind al-Salehi contends that U.S. anti-insurgent units, coming up empty-handed in raids on suspects' houses, have at times detained wives to pressure men into turning themselves in.

Iraq's deputy justice minister, Busho Ibrahim Ali, dismissed such claims, saying hostage-holding was a tactic used under the ousted Saddam Hussein dictatorship, and "we are not Saddam." A U.S. command spokesman in Baghdad, Lt. Col. Barry Johnson, said only Iraqis who pose an "imperative threat" are held in long-term U.S.-run detention facilities.

But documents describing two 2004 episodes tell a different story as far as short-term detentions by local U.S. units. The documents are among hundreds the Pentagon has released periodically under U.S. court order to meet an American Civil Liberties Union request for information on detention practices.

In one memo, a civilian Pentagon intelligence officer described what happened when he took part in a raid on an Iraqi suspect's house in Tarmiya, northwest of Baghdad, on May 9, 2004. The raid involved Task Force (TF) 6-26, a secretive military unit formed to handle high-profile targets.

"During the pre-operation brief it was recommended by TF personnel that if the wife were present, she be detained and held in order to leverage the primary target's surrender," wrote the 14-year veteran officer.

He said he objected, but when they raided the house the team leader, a senior sergeant, seized her

anyway.

"The 28-year-old woman had three young children at the house, one being as young as six months and still nursing," the intelligence officer wrote. She was held for two days and was released after he complained, he said.

Like most names in the released documents, the officer's signature is blacked out on this for-the-record memorandum about his complaint.

Of this case, command spokesman Johnson said he could not judge, months later, the factors that led to the woman's detention.

The second episode, in June 2004, is found in sketchy detail in e-mail exchanges among six U.S. Army colonels, discussing an undisclosed number of female detainees held in northern Iraq by the Stryker Brigade of the 2nd Infantry Division.

The first message, from a military police colonel, advised staff officers of the U.S. northern command that the Iraqi police would not take control of the jailed women without charges being brought against them.

In a second e-mail, a command staff officer asked an officer of the unit holding the women, "What are you guys doing to try to get the husband have you tacked a note on the door and challenged him to come get his wife?"

Two days later, the brigade's deputy commander advised the higher command, "As each day goes by, I get more input that these gals have some info and/or will result in getting the husband."

He went on, "These ladies fought back extremely hard during the original detention. They have shown indications of deceit and misinformation."

The command staff colonel wrote in reply, referring to a commanding general, "CG wants the husband."

The released e-mails stop there, and the women's eventual status could not be immediately determined.

Of this episode, Johnson said, "It is clear the unit believed the females detained had substantial knowledge of insurgent activity and warranted being held."

On the Net:

First document: http://www.aclu.org/torturefoia/released/t2614_2616.pdf

E-mail exchange: <http://www.aclu.org/projects/foiasearch/pdf/DOD044843.pdf>

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- G3 OPS EOC Org Account

From: [redacted] LTC 3/2 Infantry Brigade DCO
Sent: Saturday, June 19, 2004 6:39 AM
To: [redacted] LTC 3/2 Infantry Brigade XO
Subject: FW: Female Detainees

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted] LTC (MNB-N) C3
Sent: Saturday, June 19, 2004 2:20 PM
To: [redacted] LTC 3/2 Infantry Brigade DCO
Subject: RE: Female Detainees

[redacted] CG wants the husband. There is some concern regarding potential negative IO impact of Kurdish women being detained and then being turned over to the police. My opinion is you turn them over to the police - but our PM says they don't arrest women...? Not sure whether or not that is true. Sorry I can't be of more help.

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted] LTC 3/2 Infantry Brigade DCO
Sent: Saturday, June 19, 2004 2:02 PM
To: [redacted] LTC (MNB-N) C3
Subject: RE: Female Detainees

As each day goes by, I get more input that these gals have some info and/or will result in getting the husband.

My gut feel is that there could be some IO pushback, but haven't been feeling any. When we do release, we will release only to the IZPs.

These ladies fought back extremely hard during the original detention. They have shown indications of deceit and misinformation.

I will make these individuals a priority, for intel gathering. We are continuing to develop the release packet, but I haven't seen it yet.

Just wanted to get an azimuth check from your foxhole at this point.

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted] LTC (MNB-N) C3
Sent: Thursday, June 17, 2004 5:12 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Female Detainees

[redacted] What are you guys doing to try to get the husband - have you tacked a note on the door and challenged him to come get his wife?...or something more sophisticated I suspect from the "not necessarily the cool guys, but the guys with the cool stuff."?

[redacted] How did [redacted] do in the interview? You gonna take him? By the way, MA [redacted] will be to you in about 1 week. Thanks.

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-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] LTC (MNB-N) Provost Marshal
Sent: Thursday, June 17, 2004 5:09 PM
To: [REDACTED] COL (MNB -N) DEP CDR; [REDACTED] COL Chief of Staff; [REDACTED] LTC (MNB-N) C3
Subject: Female Detainees

Sir - the MOJ rep will house the female detainees as long as they are charged by the Iraqi Police.

They will not house the detainees for us without charges pending by the police and a judge.

[REDACTED]
LTC, MP
MND-N Provost Marshal/Security Forces OIC
DNVT 522 [REDACTED]