

Contracting Torture in Rumsfeld's Pentagon

by Edward Spannaus

In the past two issues of *EIR*, we have exposed and documented the privatization and outsourcing of war in the United States under the direction of George Shultz and Felix Rohatyn, and how this policy has been implemented by the Pentagon under the regime of Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. In his introduction to the outsourcing package in the March 31 *EIR*, Lyndon LaRouche pointed out that there are worse kinds of corruption than merely stealing from the public, as in the Halliburton's financial swindles; "the use of such privatized powers for torture, murder, and fostering of crimes against humanity" is worse, and functions as part of an intended globalized dictatorship.

In this context, we review here the significant, but little-known, role that civilian contractors played in the abuse and torture of prisoners at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

When Gen. Antonio Taguba conducted the first comprehensive (and only) investigation of the abuses at Abu Ghraib, he found four Military Intelligence (MI) personnel to be responsible for the abuses and recommended immediate disciplinary action and a further investigation. Two of the four were military officers (Col. Thomas Pappas and Lt. Col. Steve Jordan), and two were civilian contractors (Steven Stefanowicz and John Israel).

Taguba found, among other things, that Stefanowicz "Allowed and/or instructed MPs, who were not trained in interrogation techniques, to facilitate interrogations by 'setting conditions' which were neither authorized and [nor] in accordance with applicable regulations/policy. He clearly knew his instructions equated to physical abuse."

That Stefanowicz, a civilian, was in a position to give instructions to military personnel, is astounding enough. Equally astounding is the number of civilian contractors working for Military Intelligence at Abu Ghraib: According to an Army document obtained by *Salon* magazine, there were 39 employees of CACI International working at Abu Ghraib, and 63 employees of Titan Corp. or of a Titan subcontractor. As with everything else, the Army was caught short of interrogators and intelligence personnel when the Iraqi insurgency burgeoned in the Summer of 2003, and the Pentagon grabbed everybody they could. This included completely inexperienced military personnel and civilian contractors.

Army documents reviewed by *Salon* in late Summer of 2004, showed that one-third of the contract interrogators at

Abu Ghraib "had not received formal training in military interrogation techniques, policy, and doctrine." All 20 interpreters at Abu Ghraib at that time worked for Titan, and nearly half of all interrogators and analysts working at Abu Ghraib were CACI employees.

One CACI contractor who did have extensive military experience, was Torin Nelson, who has publicly spoken out, blaming the abuses at Abu Ghraib in part on an over-reliance on private contractors. Nelson told the London *Guardian* that contractors such as Titan and CACI were so anxious to meet the demands being put on them by the Army, that they sent "cooks and truck drivers"—anybody they could hire—to work as interrogators.

Frequently the contractors were virtually indistinguishable from military MI personnel, since part of the pattern at Abu Ghraib was that interrogators and those working with them often did not wear any identification. Low-level MPs, who were the ones scapegoated and prosecuted for torture and abuse, could not tell who was military and who was civilian, when they were giving orders about the handling and treatment of prisoners.

Stefanowicz was one contractor who was known, because of his large size and striking appearance. During the recent court martial of dog-handler Sgt. Michael Smith, there was significant testimony regarding Stefanowicz. According to observers from Human Rights First, Pvt. (demoted from Sgt.) Ivan Frederick testified that Colonel Pappas had authorized the use of dogs at Abu Ghraib (a practice imported from Guantanamo by Gen. Geoffrey Miller, who has now asserted the military equivalent of the Fifth Amendment to avoid testifying). Frederick testified that "Big Steve" Stefanowicz often told the dog-handlers to bring their dogs to interrogations.

According to the trial observers, "Big Steve has been mentioned by a number of witnesses as wielding quite a bit of power at the prison." Another CACI contractor testified that three CACI employees and four Army soldiers were given authority for the use of harsher interrogation techniques, including using dogs, after the capture of Saddam Hussein in mid-December 2003, and that these men became part of a "special projects team" at Abu Ghraib.

Six civilian CACI and Titan contractors, including Stefanowicz, were recommended by General Taguba for referral to the Justice Department for prosecution; no action has been taken against them to date.

There is another, murkier, area involving graver crimes, and that is the undisclosed role of contractors in Rumsfeld's special operations "hunter-killer" squads, which have operated by such designations as Task Force 20, Task Force 121, then 6-26, 145, etc. British, Australian, and Israeli commandos, among others, are reported to have been contracted for "renditions" and torture carried out by these secret teams, providing deniability as well as insulating the perpetrators from prosecution under U.S. law—should that come to pass under a new regime in this country.