

Rice denies ignoring Guantanamo prisoner abuse

WASHINGTON (AP) - National security adviser Condoleezza Rice on Sunday denied assertions in a new book that she and other top Bush administration officials ignored warnings about the abuse of prisoners at the Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

New Yorker writer Seymour Hersh, discussing the book released Monday, said senior military and national security officials received warnings from subordinates in 2002 and 2003 about such mistreatment.

Hersh said Rice held meetings on the issue and it was brought to the attention of Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld before it "disappeared."

Rice said that in the fall of 2002, the White House "was made aware that there were some concerns that people might have been held at Guantanamo who didn't meet the definition of unlawful combatant."

"There were also early on ... some concerns about conditions of overcrowding. But nothing that suggested, to my recollection, that there were abuses... going on at

Guantanamo, and certainly nothing that would suggest the kind of thing that went on in Abu Ghraib," she said, referring to the infamous Iraqi prison.

Nearly all the approximately 585 detainees at the base were captured in Afghanistan after U.S. forces invaded in October 2001 in response to the Sept. 11 attacks. The U.S. government defines an enemy combatant as "an individual who was part of or supporting Taliban or al-Qaida forces, or associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners."

A person classified as an enemy combatant can be held without being charged with a crime and without legal representation until the conflict has ended.

Rice told CNN's "Late Edition" that when the administration learned there might be people at Guantanamo who failed to meet the standard of unlawful combatant, "We looked at the cases, put together a process to try and make sure that the right people were being held."



National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice has denied that the Bush Administration ignored warnings of prisoner abuse at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. A new book insists Rice knew about the abuse.

She also said the United States worked hard to improve conditions at the Cuban prison. "I do not recall being told of anything concerning prisoner abuse," Rice said.

Rice said she and a deputy,

John Gordon, talked about conditions at Guantanamo and worked with the Pentagon to ease overcrowding. "I was also informed that there were concerns that people might have been held there who shouldn't have been held

there. We held several meetings then, and all of this was referred to the Defense Department for action," she said.

Even before release of "Chain of Command: The Road From 9/11 to Abu Ghraib," the Pentagon had issued a public statement about inquiries into the book by Hersh, who is widely credited with disclosing the Abu Ghraib prison scandal.

"It appears that Mr. Seymour Hersh's upcoming book apparently contains many of the numerous unsubstantiated allegations and inaccuracies which he has made in the past based upon unnamed sources," the Pentagon said in a statement Friday.

The statement said detainee operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere "have been examined exten-

sively" by the Defense Department and an independent panel, and that investigations continue.

"Thus far, these investigations have determined that no responsible official of the Department of Defense approved any program that could conceivably have authorized or condoned the abuses seen at Abu Ghraib," the statement said.

The Pentagon urged that if any of Hersh's anonymous sources want to come forward and offer evidence "to the contrary, the department welcomes them to do so."

Hersh, who appeared on NBC's "Meet the Press," said that after his New Yorker series on Abu Ghraib, "people who worked inside the White House came to me and said, 'Look, this is much more far-reaching than you think.'"

NAACP chief apologizes for Paige snub

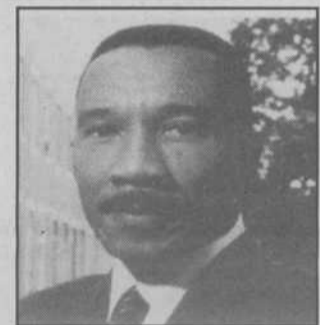
BALTIMORE (AP) - The head of the NAACP said Sunday he planned to personally apologize to Education Secretary Rod Paige, whose invitation to speak at an Ohio NAACP dinner was withdrawn.

Kweisi Mfume, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said he was "appalled" when he found out about the snub Friday.

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ter," Mfume said in a statement.

Ohio NAACP President Cybil Edwards-McNabb said last week that Paige — who was invited about three weeks

ago to speak on education reform — was cut from a dinner program at the request of the national office.

But Mfume on Sunday denied that claim, saying the

Ohio NAACP chapter made the decision on its own and that the decision "was wrong and there is no other way to say it."

Messages left Sunday for Edwards-McNabb at her office were not immediately returned, and she does not have a listed home phone number.

Paige spokeswoman Susan Aspey said the secretary was disappointed after learning that the invitation was withdrawn Tuesday.

"They said 'Thanks, but no thanks,'" Aspey said.

No reinstatement for Tulsa race riot lawsuit

DENVER (AP) - A federal appeals court has denied requests to reinstate a lawsuit filed by hundreds of people affected by a race riot in Tulsa, Okla., in 1921.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the plaintiffs waited too long to sue the city, police and other officials.

The Denver-based court ruled the statute of limitations bars the lawsuit from proceeding. The decision upholds an earlier ruling by an Oklahoma district court.

"The Tulsa race riot represents a tragic chapter in our collective history," the appeals panel wrote. "While we have found no legal avenue exists through which plaintiffs can bring their claims, we take no great comfort in that conclusion."

More than 400 plaintiffs — including about 150 survivors of the riot and 300 descendants of those killed or who lost property — filed the suit in February 2003.

Their attorney had argued a report issued in 2001 disclosed new information about the riot, and it was not until after the end of the Jim Crow era in the 1960s that courts became receptive to civil rights lawsuits.

But attorneys for Tulsa and Oklahoma said the two-year statute of limitations went into effect in 1921.

A federal judge in Tulsa threw out the lawsuit in March, saying he could not find a reason to extend the statute of limitations.

More than 100 lawsuits were filed against the city and insurance companies soon after the riot, which was sparked by an accusation that a Black man assaulted a White female elevator operator.


On May 31, 1921, armed Blacks and Whites clashed outside a courthouse where the man was being held. Ten Whites and two Blacks were killed.

Police deputized a White mob, and Tulsa's then-thriving Black community of Greenwood was reduced to ashes within about a day. The confirmed death toll was 37, but some estimates range as high as 300.

A grand jury in 1921 exonerated Whites for the destruction and blamed Blacks.

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