

ACLU: Twenty-one deaths in U.S. custody

WASHINGTON (AP) - At least 21 detainees who died while being held in U.S. custody in Iraq and Afghanistan were killed, many during or after interrogations, according to an analysis of Defense Department data by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The analysis, released Monday, looked at 44 deaths described in records obtained by the ACLU. Of those, the group characterized 21 as

homicides, and said at least eight resulted from abusive techniques by military or intelligence officers, such as strangulation or "blunt force injuries," as noted in the autopsy reports.

The 44 deaths represent a partial group of the total number of prisoners who have died in U.S. custody overseas; more than 100 have died of natural and violent causes.

In one case, the report

said, a detainee died after being smothered during interrogation by military intelligence officers in November 2003. In another case cited by the report, a prisoner died of asphyxiation and blunt force injuries after he was left standing, shackled to the top of a door frame, with a gag in his mouth.

One Afghan civilian, believed by the ACLU to be Abdul Wahid, died from "multiple blunt force inju-

ries" in 2003 at a base in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, according to an autopsy report provided by the Defense Department.

Wahid, 28, was taken from his home by Afghan militia and accused of being a terrorist. The autopsy report said he died in American custody, though his father has blamed the militiamen.

The detailed list of prisoners whose deaths the report considered homicides includes two detainees who were beaten and died from "blunt force injuries" at the Bagram Airfield detention center in Afghanistan, according to the autopsies.

Earlier this month, Pfc. Damien M. Corsetti, a military intelligence interrogator with the 519th MI Battalion

at Fort Bragg, N.C., became the 15th soldier to face charges since those 2002 deaths.

Details about the detainee abuse and deaths have been released by the Pentagon as part of a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed by the ACLU. Many of the incidents have been made public previously, and in a number of cases soldiers and officers involved have been prosecuted and punished.

"The U.S. military does not tolerate mistreatment of detainees," said Army spokesman Col. Joseph Curtin. "Past cases have been fully investigated. When there is credible evidence, commanders have the prerogative to prosecute."

To date, there have been

more than 400 investigations of detainee abuse, and more than 230 military personnel have received a court-martial, nonjudicial punishment or other administrative action.

"There is no question that U.S. interrogations have resulted in deaths," said Anthony D. Romero, ACLU's executive director. "High-ranking officials who knew about the torture and sat on their hands and those who created and endorsed these policies must be held accountable."

The data includes detainees who were interrogated by military intelligence, Navy Seals and "Other Governmental Agency" personnel, which generally refers to the CIA.

Feds may extend funds while teachers qualify

WASHINGTON (AP) - Parents have been promised that kids will get a highly qualified teacher in every core class this year. Now it's clearer what will happen if they don't.

Education Secretary Margaret Spellings has assured states that she won't strip their federal money if they fail to get all teachers qualified by the end of the school year. But that deal will be offered only to states that show they are making a serious effort.

The terms mark the first time the Education Department has explained how it will enforce the sweeping teacher-quality promise of President Bush's No Child Left Behind law. Notably, states can get a full extra year to comply — if they can prove their case to Spellings.

Specifically, states must have a legitimate definition of "highly qualified," report accurate data about the quality of their teachers, and try to ensure poor and minority students do not have a larger share of unqualified teachers than other children do.

Otherwise, Spellings said in a letter to chief state school officers, she may withhold federal money. That's significant because money is the government's only major tool of enforcement, and enforcement is the only way parents know whether the promise has been kept.

Nothing in the law or the new guidance forces any unqualified teacher to be fired.

"If you acted in good faith, what we're going to say is, 'OK. We need to sit down and talk. What is your game plan?'" said Assistant Secretary Tom Luce. "What are you going to do that's new and different? We want to hold people's feet to the fire."

It will be up to Spellings' team to decide who has shown good faith and who

hasn't.

Under the law, teachers in all major subjects are supposed to be highly qualified this year, which means having a bachelor's degree, state certification and proven competence in every subject they teach. Teachers in isolated, rural areas have an extra year to qualify.

Most states already say that more than 90 percent of their teachers are highly qualified. But independent analyses show those numbers are dubious because of the lax criteria some states have chosen for veteran teachers and because of questions about unreliable data.

In her letter, Spellings acknowledged the challenge of getting top teachers in some small, rural schools and in hard-to-fill subject areas. But she warned she has real concerns that some states have not set appropriate definitions of quality or kept parents informed.

States that end up deemed to have made a strong effort will get a one-year extension to comply, to the end of the 2006-07 academic term. They must explain how they will improve.

Initial reaction from both teachers unions was upbeat, but with reservations. "You've got to give the secretary some credit. I think they're making some effort," said Reg Weaver, president

of the National Education Association, a union often at odds with the department.

Weaver added, however, that it would have been simpler for the department to just extend the deadline for a year without all the "complicated criteria" for states and districts.

Antonia Cortese, executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, said the new guidance includes a lot of common sense. But she said it does not address the underlying problem of getting qualified teachers into many rural and urban areas. And teachers aides gain no extra time or help under the new flexibility, Cortese said.

"I don't think we've squarely addressed the issue," she said.

The department's enforcement of fair access to quality teachers among all children is overdue, said Fredreka Schouten, senior associate for The Education Trust, which advocates for poor and minority kids. It is also good news that schools no longer have to worry about exceedingly harsh penalties for failing to get all teachers qualified by this year, she said. "That was never the case," she said. "The department should have clarified this long ago, instead of allowing these misguided notions to fester."

Annan: Eritrea-Ethiopia is very dangerous crisis

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that U.N. peacekeepers face an "alarming situation" in the tense Ethiopia-Eritrean border area following Eritrean restrictions on their movements and urged the Security Council to take action to prevent another

war. The council was scheduled to meet Wednesday afternoon to discuss the dispute between the Horn of Africa neighbors, which fought a 2 1/2-year border war that ended in a December 2000 peace agreement.

Greece's U.N. Ambassador (See Annan, Page 12)

Obama: Boycott threats silly

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) - Conservatives overreacted when they threatened to boycott doll-maker American Girl over its contributions to a youth group that supports abortion rights, U.S. Sen. Barack Obama said Monday. "It's just silly," said Obama, D-Ill. "This is a classic example of overreaction and a lack of proportion."

Speaking before the youth group's Omaha chapter, Obama praised Girls Inc. and said it played an important role in helping girls set goals for themselves.

"An organization like this plays a vital part in making certain we are opening up our windows and letting our girls look upon the horizon and see which path they want to follow," he said.

Race

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"I remember my son once said to me, 'Why did you sit in the back of the bus? Why didn't you just go up front?' I said 'I didn't want to get killed,'" said Earl G. Graves Sr., 70, publisher of *Black Enterprise Magazine*. "He looked at me and blinked."

"Young people have to be reignited," he added.

Said Gordon: "It ought to renew in people the recognition that individual actions make a difference."

Lewis lamented that, in the last three weeks, several women civil rights pioneers have died: C. Delores Tucker, the first Black woman to be Pennsylvania's secretary of state; Constance Baker Motley, the first Black and the first woman to serve as a federal judge in the southern district of New York; and Vivian Malone, who defied Alabama Gov. George Wallace as one of the first Black students to enroll

at the University of Alabama in 1963.

"And now Rosa Parks," he said. "It's so important for people to tell their stories over and over again."

Johnson, who teaches Black history to teenagers in the Washington, D.C., area, agreed.

"We use history as our guide to help young people make better choices and bet-

ter decisions," she said. Working with the Kiamsha Youth Empowerment program in Prince George's County, Md., Johnson links Parks' self-respect with choices young people today can make — to stay away from drugs and alcohol, for instance. "You won't understand where you're going until you know where you've been," she said.

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