

# Who is Behind the Abuse at Abu Ghraib?

**By Christopher Bollyn – Rumor Mill News May 6, 2004**

Despite extensive coverage, the mainstream media has failed to ask the key questions about the abuse of the Iraqi detainees: Who is really behind the torture and humiliation of the Iraqi prisoners and why was it done?

"I share a deep disgust that those prisoners were treated the way they were treated," President George W. Bush said about the published photographs of tortured and humiliated Iraqi prisoners from the U.S.-run prison near Baghdad. "Their treatment does not reflect the nature of the American people. That's not the way we do things in America."

Most Americans would agree that the abuse caught on film at Abu Ghraib prison seems utterly foreign. The media, however, is not exploring the question implied by the president's statement: If not American, then who is behind the humiliation of the Iraqi prisoners?

While the mainstream media wallows in the details of the abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad it avoids asking the questions that could reveal who is behind the sordid saga.

The lowly Army reservists seen smiling in scenes of abuse appear to be mere actors – useful idiots – in a drama directed by a hidden hand. But who is truly responsible for this drama? And why was it photographed?

A May 5 New York Times article about Hayder Sabbar Abd, a 34-year-old Shiite Iraqi being victimized in the infamous photos, raises the most obvious question: Why was the perverse abuse he and six other simple detainees suffered photographed?

**Ordered by the Translator**

"The curiosity, through much of the ordeal, was the camera," Ian Fisher wrote. "It was a detail he mentioned repeatedly as he recalled being forced against a wall and ordered by the Arabic translator to masturbate." It's odd that, according to Abd, the translator was giving the orders.

"All the while, he [Abd] said, the flash of the camera kept illuminating the dim room that once held prisoners of Mr. [Saddam] Hussein, recording images that have infuriated the Arab world and badly sullied America's image."

It seems unlikely that a group of U.S. Army Military Police [MP] would allow themselves to be filmed indulging in "sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses." The prisoners being abused in the photos were not being abused prior to interrogation, according to Abd. The mistreatment in the photos "appeared to be punishment for bad behavior," the Times reported.

"The truth is we were not terrorists," Abd said. "We were not insurgents. We were just ordinary people. And American intelligence knew that."

Abd claims that he was never interrogated, and never charged with a crime. Most of the American soldiers had treated him well and with respect. "Americans did not mistreat me in general," he said. "But these people must be tried."

### **Taguba's Investigation**

Major General Antonio M. Taguba, who conducted the Army's investigation into the alleged abuses at Abu Ghraib earlier this year, said Army investigators have "extremely graphic photographic evidence" of abuse in "pictures and videos."

Taguba's report says "egregious acts and grave breaches of international law" were committed when an "ambiguous command relationship" existed at the prison. This breakdown in the chain-of-command was due to Fragmentary Order 1108, dated 19 November 2003.

"This effectively made an MI [Military Intelligence] Officer, rather than an MP Officer, responsible for the MP units conducting detainee operations at that facility," Taguba wrote.

Fragmentary Order 1108 made Col. Thomas M. Pappas, Commander of the 205th MI Brigade, responsible for the MP units at Abu Ghraib prison.

Taguba's report, which was presented to his superiors in early March, recommended that an investigation be conducted "to determine the extent of culpability of MI personnel."

Apart from the failings of the senior officers who should have done more to prevent the abuse, Taguba names four individuals as key suspects. "Specifically," Taguba wrote, "I suspect that Col. Thomas M. Pappas, LTC Steve L. Jordan, Mr. Steven Stephanowicz, and Mr. John Israel were either directly or indirectly responsible for the abuses at Abu Ghraib and strongly recommend immediate disciplinary action."

Jordan is former director of the Joint Interrogation and Debriefing Center and Liaison Officer to the 205th MI Brigade.

Stephanowicz is a "civilian interrogator" employed by CACI International of Chantilly, Va., and "John Israel" is said to be a "civilian interpreter." Both were working with the 205th MI Brigade at the time of the abuse. According to the report these private contractors were at times supervising the interrogations.

"In general," Taguba wrote, "U.S. civilian contract personnel (Titan Corp., CACI, etc.) third country nationals, and local contractors do not appear to be properly supervised within the detention facility at Abu Ghraib." The third country nationals are not identified in the report.

Although Stephanowicz and Israel are both named as being "directly or indirectly responsible for the abuses at Abu Ghraib," very little has been said about either of them in the mainstream media. Why are they being overlooked?

## **Who is John Israel?**

The Taguba report isn't clear about John Israel. In the body of the report he is mistakenly identified as a CACI employee. Only in the annex on the last page is he noted as being with Titan Corp., a high tech military company based in San Diego.

Questions abound about "John Israel." Ralph Williams, spokesman for Titan Corp., told the Times that Israel "worked for a Titan subcontractor that he would not name."

"John Israel" is most likely the nom de guerre of an Arabic-speaking intelligence agent who was placed in Iraq through Titan. Both Titan and CACI have directors with strong ties to the Israeli military establishment.

The director of Titan with the largest stake in the company is Edward H. Bersoff, who received the Distinguished Leadership Award by the Washington Chapter of the American Jewish Committee in 1999. Bersoff has been an honored speaker at the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, along with the likes of Sharon's right-wing ally Benjamin Netanyahu.

On January 14, Dr. J.P. (Jack) London, chairman, president, and CEO of CACI International, flew to Israel to receive the Albert Einstein Technology Award from the Jerusalem Fund. The award was presented by Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and Uri Lupolianski, Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Jewish Mayor at a ceremony in the occupied city on January 14, 2004.

CACI was awarded a \$10,118,040 firm-fixed-price contract from the U.S. Army on Feb. 26, 2004 for 24 contract specialists, like Stephanowicz, to work in Iraq. Each CACI specialist is costing the U.S. taxpayer \$421,585 per year.

On May 3, Titan reported a 21 percent growth in its first quarter revenues of \$459 million. "Titan's linguist contract with the U.S. Army" was noted as a "primary driver" behind the companies increased revenues. The only language tool Titan offers on its website is for "Levantine Arabic," i.e. the Arabic spoken in Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria.

Last July, however, Titan Systems Corporation of Fairfax, Va., placed an ad for "native Arabic, Aramaic, Kurdish, Persian, Pashto, Turkish and Dari speakers." Titan's ad for interpreters required the native speakers be U.S. citizens and fluent in English. It is extremely unlikely that any native speaker of Arabic would be named "John Israel."

### **Still on the Job**

Taguba's report called for Stephanowicz to be terminated and reprimanded, but on April 25 he was still on the job at Abu Ghraib hitting golfballs from the roof onto the highway in his free time, according to the "Iraq Diary" of one of his co-workers. Until recently, Joe Ryan, one of the interrogators, had his revealing journal about his work at Abu Ghraib posted on the website of KSTP, a St. Paul, Minnesota radio station. According to KSTP's Ron Rosenbaum, the journal was removed at Ryan's request when the photos of abuse surfaced.

As of May 5, however, two months after Taguba had called for Stephanowicz to be fired, CACI, Stephanowicz's employer, said they had "received no information from the Dept. of Defense" on the matter.

### **Phenomenal Damage**

"Everybody understands the phenomenal damage this accusation has caused in that part of the world," Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware, the senior Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, said. "This is the single most significant undermining act that's occurred in a decade in that region of the world, in terms of our standing."

The abuse at Abu Ghraib resembles Israeli methods applied in the occupied territories. "Israel is the only country in which the kind of abuse documented at Abu Ghraib occurs as a matter of policy," Hussein Ibish, spokesman for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the largest Arab-American organization, told American Free Press.

Palestinian news sources are replete with similar accounts of Israeli soldiers forcing Palestinians to strip and perform degrading sexual acts. Reports of Palestinian prisoners having been sodomized during torture sessions with Israeli military interrogators are common.

Washington Report on Middle East Affairs has articles on such abuse going back to 1996. Israeli soldiers paraded naked Palestinians through the streets of Jerusalem after the massacre of Deir Yassin in April 1948. Dr. Hazem Nusseibeh of Palestine Broadcasting witnessed the massacre and its aftermath. Nusseibeh said women were bayoneted and about 11 children were made to parade naked through the streets of Jerusalem.

Palestine Chronicle, an online news source, carried an article in November 2002 titled "Stripping Palestinians has Become Common Practice."

The article described an incident in which Israeli soldiers ordered a young resident of the town of Nablus to strip completely naked in the street and act like a dog.

### **Deliberate Intelligence Tactic**

"It was a deliberate intelligence tactic," Ibish said when asked if he thought the photos could be part of an Israeli intelligence plot to damage U.S. relations in the Arab world. "[Ariel] Sharon plays a zero-sum game," he said. "He thinks the worst possible relations between United States and the people of the Arab and Muslim world is good for Israel."

American Free Press asked the coalition press desk in Baghdad if Israeli advisors worked with the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq or at the Abu Ghraib prison. "No to both," was the response from Major Carolyn Dysart.

Rafael Barak, spokesman at the Israeli embassy in Washington, said he was "not aware" of any Israeli presence in Iraq.

The accused military personnel may face courts martial, but the

civilian contractors can be charged with war crimes through the War Crimes Act of 1996 and the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act of 2000, according to Francis A. Boyle, author and professor of international law at the University of Illinois.

War crimes cases against U.S. civilians working with the military in Iraq would be prosecuted by the Dept. of Justice, Boyle said.

"The question is how high this goes," he added. "[Lieut. General Ricardo S.] Sanchez is letting the superiors off the hook." Boyle's latest book on Iraq is entitled *Destroying World Order: U.S. Imperialism in the Middle East Before and After September 11th*.

"Tell him to walk and bark like a dog." That's right, good. O.K., I've got the picture."

Question: Where have we seen this before?

Answer: ISRAELI OCCUPIED PALESTINE

<http://www.rumormillnews.com/cgi-bin/forum.cgi?read=48426>

Also see:

Who is John Israel? Why was he Running the Show?

<http://www.thetruthseeker.co.uk/article.asp?id=1788>

<http://www.thetruthseeker.co.uk/print.asp?ID=1784>