

## Abu Ghraib: A Partial Timeline of Events

Please note: Due to the secrecy of events at Abu Ghraib, some of the dates are not exact.

**2003** On March 19, the US invades Iraq. By April, Saddam's regime collapses. Abu Ghraib, one of Saddam's prisons, is looted and stripped of everything that can be taken including many doors and windows. (1. Hersh, 21)

**Spring – Summer** Abu Ghraib is repaired by US and becomes a US military prison (1. Hersh, 21) Soldiers of the 372<sup>nd</sup> Military Police Company (M.P.), a reserve unit based in Cresaptown, Maryland, arrive at Abu Ghraib. They include: Staff Sergeant Ivan "Chip" Fredrick, Sergeant Javal Davis, Specialist Sabrina Harman, Specialist Charles Graner, Private Lynndie England, Specialist Megan Ambuhl, and Private Jeremy Sivits. (Gourevitch, Morris)

- *April 16:* Rumsfeld approves a new list of interrogation techniques for use at Guantánamo including environmental and food manipulation and sleep "adjustment."
  - Previously, on Dec. 2, 2002, Rumsfeld authorized using harsh interrogation tactics (including stress positions, use of phobias, forced nudity, isolation, hooding, and waterboarding) for Guantánamo. (Benjamin)
- *June 30:* Army Reserve Brigadier General Janis Karpinski is put in charge of three large jails in Iraq (including Abu Ghraib), eight battalions, and 3,400 Army reservists. She has no training in handling prisoners and has never run a prison system previously. (2. Hersh)

**August - September:** There are several thousand prisoners at Abu Ghraib, including women and children. They are mostly civilians who have been picked up at random checkpoints and military sweeps. (1. Hersh, 21)

- *August:* General Geoffrey Miller (Commander at Guantánamo) brings a team of specialists to Iraq to review the army program. He recommends that military police should not just be guarding prisoners but should first and foremost be interrogating them. (1. Hersh, 31) It is believed many of the techniques used at Guantánamo migrated to Abu Ghraib around this time. (Benjamin)
- *Sept. 14:* Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez (in command of US forces in Iraq) issues a standard operating procedure for interrogation of prisoners. The tactics authorized include use of stress positions, environmental and sleep manipulation and use of military dogs. (Benjamin)

**October – December:** With no specialized experience, the M.P.'s of the 372<sup>nd</sup> are ordered to prison-guard duty at Abu Ghraib. (1. Hersh, 26) Typically, combat M.P.'s do not run prisons. The company commander of the 372<sup>nd</sup>, Captain Donald Reese, was a window-blinds salesman in his civilian life. (Gourevitch, Morris) Many of the abuses at Abu Ghraib take place during this time. (The A.P.) Throughout this period, Corporal Charles Graner takes pride in showing officers higher up in the chain of command the now-famous photographs of detainees and detainee abuse. He never receives any objections from these superiors and even receives praise from Captain Reese. (Gourevitch, Morris)

- *October:* After visiting part of the prison, the International Red Cross finds Abu Ghraib to be systematically violating the Geneva Conventions. They cite concerns over the treatment of detainees, including detainees paraded around naked while being verbally and physically threatened. (Gourevitch, Morris)
- *October 7:* Three military intelligence soldiers allegedly assault a female detainee.
  - The unnamed woman later told investigators that she was taken to an empty cell where two soldiers forcibly kissed her and showed her a naked male detainee. She was threatened and her shirt was removed. There was no record of an authorized interrogation and the soldiers' names have not been made public. (Scherer, Benjamin)
- *October 28:* Charles Graner takes multiple photos of two female detainees who had been arrested on suspicion of prostitution. The women are posed with their shirts pulled up exposing their breasts. (Scherer, Benjamin)
- *November 4 (early morning):* Sergeant Ricardo Romero of the Army's Criminal Investigative Division brings a new prisoner to Abu Ghraib. When ordering the M.P. soldiers to interrogate the prisoner, he states, "I don't give a fuck what you do to him, just don't kill him." The prisoner, nicknamed Gilligan, appears in the most iconic photo from the Abu Ghraib abuse standing on a ration box with his arms outstretched and head hooded.
  - The Criminal Investigative Unit will later find Gilligan innocent. (Gourevitch, Morris)

- *November 4 (afternoon)*: Navy SEALs abduct Manadel-al-Jamadi, suspected of supplying explosives to insurgents, and bring him to Abu Ghraib for interrogation. Upon arrival Jamadi is walking and speaking normally. CIA officer Mark Swanner takes him to a shower room for interrogation. Jamadi's arms are pulled behind his back in a crucifixion style manner and a sandbag is put over his head while being interrogated under the shower. About 45 minutes later he is dead. Jamadi's body is wrapped in plastic and put on ice to slow decomposition.
- *November 4 (evening)*: Charles Graner takes pictures of Sabrina Harman posing with Jamadi's body, smiling and giving the thumbs up. (Mayer)
  - Harman will later testify that the body was bruised around the knees and genitals with restraint marks at his wrists. There was also blood coming out of his ears and nose. (Gourevitch, Morris)
- *November 5*: Medics arrive at Abu Ghraib and put Jamadi's body on a stretcher with a fake IV in his arm and remove him from the prison.
  - A later autopsy reveals Jamadi had 6 broken ribs and died from "blunt-force" injuries and "asphyxiation." (Zagorin)
- *November 24*: Twelve prisoners are shot, three killed, in a prison riot at Abu Ghraib. (The A.P.)
- *December*: A female prisoner at Abu Ghraib (known only as "Noor") manages to smuggle out a letter. The letter claims that US guards had been raping female detainees and several of the women had become pregnant. The women are being forced to strip naked. The note requests that Iraqi resistance fighters bomb the prison to spare the women further shame. (Harding)
- *December 12*: Military dogs are used in interrogations of prisoners and photographed with two separate cameras. The photographs depict two Army dog handlers restraining a German Shepherd in front of prisoner. In another photo taken several minutes later, the Iraqi prisoner is on the ground bleeding from the leg while a soldier sits on top of him. (1. Hersh, 35) Dog handlers also have not received any formal training in interrogation. (Rejali, 433)
- *December 14*: Janis Karpinski tells *The St. Petersburg Times*, "living conditions now are better in prison than at home. At one point we were concerned that they wouldn't want to leave." (2. Hersh)

**2004** Abu Ghraib is the most attacked American base in Iraq. The prison holds more than 7,000 men, women, and children. The youngest prisoner is a 10 year-old boy, who like the other women and children is being used as a pawn to break his father. (Gourevitch, Morris)

**January – March** During this period, The Red Cross concludes that perhaps as many as 80-90% of Abu Ghraib detainees were simply at the wrong place at the wrong time and have absolutely no intelligence value. (Hilde, 201) These findings will later be corroborated by US Generals.

- *January 13*: Specialist Joseph Darby (M.P.) becomes alarmed by a CD of images depicting detainee abuse given to him by Charles Graner. He gives the disc to Special Agent Scott Bobeck, thereby exposing others to the abuses going on at Abu Ghraib. (1. Hersh, 25)
- *January 15*: Lt. General Bantz Craddock (Rumsfeld's senior military assistant) and Vice-Admiral Timothy Keating (director of the Joint Staff of the J.C.S.) are emailed a summary of the abuses depicted in the photos. It states that about 10 soldiers were involved in acts such as physically beating and dragging detainees with dog collars, forcing prisoners to be nude while female guards pointed at their genitals, and having detainees perform indecent acts on one another. (3. Hersh)
- *January 16*: Three days after reviewing the pictures from Abu Ghraib, US Central Command issues a brief press release about an investigation of prisoner abuse.
  - Donald Rumsfeld will later state that this is when he first heard about the abuse allegations and only afterwards informed President Bush. (1. Hersh, 26)
- *January 18*: General Janis Karpinski is admonished by Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez (a senior commander in Iraq). (The A.P.)
- *February*: Authorized by Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez, Major General Antonio M. Taguba finishes a report on the conditions of Abu Ghraib. The report is not intended for public release. (2. Hersh)
  - In the course of his investigation, Taguba sees classified documents that reveal that only "one or two" of the detainees at Abu Ghraib are suspected Al Qaeda members. Most have nothing to do with the insurgency, and some were just common criminals. (3. Hersh)

- *February 26:* Lt. Gen. Sanchez publicly announces the suspension of 17 military personnel but gives no details. (The A.P.)
- *March 4:* The Taguba Report is issued. The Report details widespread abuse at Abu Ghraib and concludes that guards should not play a role in interrogations of prisoners. Taguba relates that between October and December of 2003, there were numerous “sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses at Abu Ghraib” perpetrated by the soldiers of the 372<sup>nd</sup> Military Police Co. and also by individuals in the American intelligence community. Other findings include:
  - Abu Ghraib is filled beyond capacity
  - The M.P guards are undermanned and in short supply of resources
  - There is no established method for determining which prisoners are innocent and which are of intelligence value
  - Karpinski is rarely seen at the prisons she is in charge of running. (2. Hersh)

According to the Taguba Report, there are 1,800 digital photographs taken by US guards at Abu Ghraib. (Harding)

**April – August:** Toward the beginning of this period, the photos from Abu Ghraib become public and are met with international outcry. A few days before the Abu Ghraib photos surfaces, George W. Bush proclaims the torture chambers of Iraq to be no longer operating. (2. Hersh)

- *April 28:* CBS airs the photos of the Abu Ghraib abuses. Bush and Rumsfeld state that this is the first time they have heard of the abuse. (The A.P.) The photos include images of:
  - Private Lynndie England giving a thumbs-up and pointing at an Iraqi prisoner’s genitals
  - England and Charles Graner standing grinning overtop of a naked human pyramid of prisoners
  - Naked hooded detainees posed in positions to suggest they are performing oral sex on one another. (1. Hersh, 23)
  - *NBC News* will later quote US military officials confirmations that unreleased Abu Ghraib photos and video exist and depict American soldiers brutally beating an Iraqi prisoner, soldiers having sex with a female prisoner, and US guards raping young boys. (1. Hersh, 43)
- *April 30:* Major General Geoffrey Miller is put in charge of US-run prisons in Iraq. (The A.P)
- *May:* A new case surfaces: An Iraqi woman in her 70’s detained in July 2003 was held for six weeks during which time she was “told she was a donkey,” harnessed by soldiers, and ridden around. (Harding)
- *May 3:* President Bush urges Rumsfeld to punish any guilty US soldiers. Rumsfeld’s aides say he has not yet read the Taguba Report but has been kept informed of the situation. (The A.P.)
- *May 7:* The Senate and House committees call on Rumsfeld to testify about the abuses at Abu Ghraib. He apologizes for the abuses and for not telling the President or Congress sooner. He also proposes compensation for victims and a review of the prison system. (The A.P.) Rumsfeld is vague about when the abuses were first discussed with the President and claims to not remember if it was in January, February, or March.
  - Rumsfeld also claims to have had no idea of the magnitude of the abuse. He states he just saw the photos for the first time “last night at 7:30.”
  - Freshman Democratic Congressman, Kendrick Meek (FL) asks Rumsfeld if it is time to resign. Rumsfeld replies, “I’m certainly not going to resign because some people are going to make a political issue out of it.” (3. Hersh)
- *August:* An independent panel headed by former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger (who served in the Nixon and Ford administrations) finds there is institutional responsibility at higher levels for the abuses that occurred at Abu Ghraib, but clears Rumsfeld of any responsibility. (3. Hersh)

**2005** Formal proceedings begin against the soldiers involved in the Abu Ghraib abuses.

- *May:* Sabrina Harman, Megan Ambuhl, Javal Davis, Chip Fredrick, Lynndie England, and Charles Graner, among several others, are sentenced to punishments ranging from reduction in pay to ten years in prison. No one that did not appear in the photographs was ever charged for the abuses and the only person above staff sergeant to face a court-martial was cleared of any wrongdoing. (Gourevitch, Morris)
- *July:* During hearings for two Army dog handlers accused of mistreating detainees at Abu Ghraib, testimony details how the use of military dogs to intimidate prisoners were first used at Guantánamo Bay and later approved for use in Abu Ghraib.

- The dog trainers are charged with maltreatment of prisoners stemming from their use of unmuzzled dogs used to threaten and attack detainees. One detainee was bitten on the both thighs during one interrogation and other detainees were frightened into urinating on themselves in a “game” the dog handlers played. (White)
- Major General Geoffrey Miller refuses to testify in the dog handler trials, using the military equivalent of the Fifth Amendment. Col. Thomas Pappas testifies that Miller introduced the use of dogs and other harsh tactics to Abu Ghraib. (Salon Staff)

**2006** Formal proceedings continue against the soldiers involved in the Abu Ghraib abuses.

- *March*: Sergeant Michael Smith, an Army dog handler, is found guilty of abusing detainees with his German Shepard at Abu Ghraib. During the trial Colonel Thomas Pappas testifies under a grant of immunity that the Army lacked clear rules for using dogs during interrogations at Abu Ghraib. (Schmitt)

### Recent Related Events

**2008**

- *January*: Lt. Colonel Steven L. Jordon is cleared of any charges for his failure to supervise the 11 lower-ranking soldiers convicted in the abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib. The decision means that no officers or civilian leaders will be held responsible for the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse. (The A.P. MSNBC)
- *December*: After an 18-month long investigation, a bipartisan Senate committee finds that decisions made by Donald Rumsfeld were “the direct cause” of the widespread abuses at Abu Ghraib. They also conclude the other administration officials under George H. W. Bush were responsible for creating the legal climate that allowed for the abuses. The Senate committee did not investigate the CIA’s treatment of detainees or the agency’s network of secret “black site” prisons (Miller, Barnes)

**2009**

- *January*: Obama vows to shut down the “black sites” prisons around the world and also close down Guantánamo in one year. (Goldenburg, MacAskill) The Obama administration later retracts and states that rendition-- forcible transfer of individuals to third-party countries--will continue to be used by the US on suspected terrorists. (Gutteridge)
- *February 21*: Abu Ghraib formally reopens, renamed Baghdad Central Prison. The renovated prison has modern medical facilities, a computer facility, and a mosque. At the time of reopening it already had around 400 inmates. (Tawfeeq)
- *April 29*: Obama releases memos showing that Bush administration gave the CIA authorization to torture suspects at Guantánamo and secret detention centers around the world. Obama chooses not to prosecute those who had been involved, stating it is “time for reflection, not retribution.” The memos (earliest from August 2002) show the Justice Department gave the approval to John Rizzo (then acting General Council to the CIA) for use of “increased pressure” in interrogations of suspected al-Qaida prisoners.
  - The techniques approved in the memos included: water boarding, cramped confinement, slaps to the face, facial hold, walling (pushing suspects into a wall), sleep and/or food deprivation, attention grasp, and use of insects in prison confinement. (MacAskill)
- *April*: Attorney General Eric Holder states there will be no prosecution of CIA operatives working within the Bush administration guidelines. He states, “It would be unfair to prosecute dedicated men and women working to protect America for conduct that was sanctioned in advance by the Justice Department.” (MacAskill)
- *July*: Obama announces that, even if found innocent of any crimes, detainees can be held indefinitely. Like the Bush administration, the Obama administration finds that the detainees in the War on Terror are dangerous and capable of committing future crimes and, therefore, are separate from traditional war-crime prosecutions. (Bravin)

- *August*: A report by the CIA Inspector General describes the 2004 torture of prisoners. CIA agents conducted mock executions, dragged prisoners down hallways, forced detainees to inhale smoke until they vomited, and in one case threatened a prisoner with a gun and power drill. (Gutteridge)

## 2010

- *January*: Human Rights Watch and The United Nations release a report indicating there is clear evidence of the United Kingdom's role in the mistreatment of prisoners and involvement in secret detention sites used to imprison and interrogate several British Muslims. The report also reveals the names of many other governments that play a role in the kidnapping and secret detention of suspected terrorists. These countries include the US, UK, Algeria, China, Iran, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. (Cobain)
- *January 29*: The Bush administration lawyers who authorized torture memos are cleared of professional-misconduct by the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility. Previously the report found that two key individuals, Jay Bybee (currently a federal appellate court judge) and John Yoo (currently a law professor at the University of California, Berkley) had violated their professional obligations when they crafted the 2002 memo that approved the use of harsh interrogations and tactics.
  - The 2002 memo included a section giving the president power to override a federal law banning torture.
  - Around the same time, the CIA also requested immunity for officers who engaged in the torture of detainees—a request denied by Michael Chertoff (then Chief of the Justice Department's Criminal Division). To circumvent this, John Yoo drafted a section saying the CIA could claim they were acting in self-defense to prevent future terror attacks.
  - After meeting with David Addington (Dick Cheney's Chief Council), John Yoo also inserted a section regarding the President's wartime powers. (Isikoff, Klaidman)

Although found to have shown “bad judgment,” John Yoo and Jay Baybee are cleared of professional misconduct.

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