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## **The Pentagon's Plunge into Barbarism**

**by Jacob G. Hornberger**

A British citizen, Jamal Harith, who was held in Cuba for two years without trial by Pentagon officials, is alleging that U.S. troops committed the same kinds of [abuse in Cuba](#) that they committed in Iraq — severe beatings, forced injections, sleep deprivation, shackling in painful positions, and sexual humiliation. Harith was ultimately released to Great Britain, without any charges whatsoever being filed against him by either U.S. or British officials. His accounts are being echoed by four other British citizens who were jailed at Guantanamo and later released.

The Pentagon is denying the charges, summarily claiming, “The allegations being made by these individuals are untrue and not credible.”

But it is Pentagon officials themselves who lack credibility and who are undeserving of any more blind trust.

- After all, it is the Pentagon that has jailed people in Cuba for long periods of time without charges, denying them the right to counsel and due process of law, before releasing them.
- It is the Pentagon that openly declared that the Geneva Convention did not apply to its prison operation in Cuba and elsewhere.
- It is the Pentagon that refused to permit the Red Cross, the press, and human-rights groups to visit and monitor its Cuba operations.
- It is the Pentagon that conducted a training exercise at its Guantanamo Bay prisoner facility in which a U.S. soldier who posed as a prisoner [received a severe beating](#) at the hands of his fellow soldiers.
- It is the Pentagon that transferred its commanding general in Cuba, a man whose own credibility is [seriously in question](#), to Abu Ghraib prison when, coincidentally, the sex abuse, rape, torture, and murders began taking place at that

facility, a general who is alleged to have announced that he intended to “Gitmo-ize” Abu Ghraib prison.

- It is the Pentagon, by its own account, that totally failed to monitor the goings-on at Abu Ghraib or, at worst, might even have approved of it.
- It is the Pentagon that is trying its best to limit the criminal charges at Abu Ghraib to a few enlisted men and to avoid court-martialing the officers in charge.
- It is the Pentagon that delivered the Taguba report to Congress with a reported [2,000 pages missing](#) from it.
- It is the Pentagon that is [punishing military personnel](#) who have the courage to come forward and disclose and oppose the wrongdoing.
- It is the Pentagon that failed to disclose that U.S. mistreatment of prisoners is [much more widespread](#) than that which occurred at Abu Ghraib.

If former Iraqi detainees were alleging that they had been sexually abused and tortured at Abu Ghraib, would the Pentagon have admitted the charges? Of course not. Pentagon officials would be saying the same thing they’re saying about the Cuba detainees — that they’re obviously lying, that they lack credibility, that they can’t be trusted, that U.S. military officials would never lie, and that the American people should continue placing their blind faith in the Pentagon. The difference, of course, lies in the photos taken at Abu Ghraib. The Pentagon cannot escape the consequences of those photos.

With its express approval of the misconduct at Abu Graib (at worst) or its negligent failure to prevent such conduct (at best), the Pentagon has brought disgrace on our nation. It is time for Congress to reassume its superior role over the military and restore a sense of integrity and honor to our country. A good place to begin would be a complete and authentic external investigation into the Pentagon’s treatment of U.S. prisoners, not only in Cuba, Iraq, and Afghanistan, but also all over the world, the opening up of all U.S. prisoner facilities for regular inspection by the Red Cross, the press, and international humanitarian groups, and the enactment of legislation requiring the U.S. military to apply the Geneva Convention to all its prisoners everywhere in the world regardless of whether they are labeled as legal or illegal combatants. The Pentagon [cannot be trusted](#) to accomplish these things on its own. We must never permit the Pentagon to plunge our nation into the ranks of the barbarians again.

*Mr. Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.*

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