

Lawsuit seeks disclosure of Guantanamo interrogation videos

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- The Center for Constitutional Rights has filed the lawsuit
- Group wants videotapes of terror detainee's interrogations made public
- U.S. says Mohammed al-Qahtani was intended to be 20th hijacker in 9/11 attacks
- Group says detainee has endured isolation, 20-hour interrogations and forced nudity



A guard keeps watch from a tower at the military facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

By **Carol Cratty**, CNN Senior Producer

updated 9:45 AM EST, Tue January 10, 2012

Washington (CNN) -- A legal group filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit on Monday asking that videotapes showing the interrogation of a terror detainee at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, be made public.

The suit filed in the Southern District of New York is focused on interrogation techniques used on Mohammed al-Qahtani, a man U.S. authorities have said was intended to be the 20th hijacker in the 9/11 terror attacks.

"From 2002 through 2003, Mr. al-Qahtani was the victim of a deliberate and calculated interrogation strategy involving the repeated use of torture and other profoundly cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment," according to the lawsuit filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights.

The lawsuit says al-Qahtani was subjected to severe sleep deprivation, isolation, 20-hour interrogations, severe temperatures and forced nudity. The suit says al-Qahtani also

experienced "religious, sexual, and moral humiliation" including instances in which female interrogators straddled him.

The lawsuit was brought against the Department of Defense, Department of Justice, FBI and CIA. Representatives for those agencies declined to comment.

During a conference call with reporters, the center said lawyers involved with the case had seen some videotapes of al-Qahtani as the result of a 2009 federal court ruling, but they were not allowed to discuss them publicly.

"I found them extremely disturbing, sickening even," said Sandra Babcock, a human rights lawyer at Northwestern Law School.

Al-Qahtani's treatment "has been the subject of public debate and congressional inquiries, as well as internal agency investigations," according to the lawsuit. "The American public should now be permitted to see what occurred for itself."

Babcock described al-Qahtani as a "broken man" who may never recover from the psychological and physical effects of the interrogation techniques allegedly used on him.

In a 2009 interview with The Washington Post, the Pentagon official in charge of deciding whether Guantanamo detainees would go to trial said she concluded the al-Qahtani case could not proceed because of all the interrogation techniques used on him.

"His treatment met the legal definition of torture," Susan Crawford, then head of the convening authority of military commissions, told The Washington Post. "The techniques they used were all authorized, but the manner in which they applied them was overly aggressive and too persistent." Crawford has since left that Pentagon post.

Al-Qahtani, a citizen of Saudi Arabia, tried to enter the United States at Orlando, Florida, on August 4, 2001, a little more than a month before the September 11 attacks. He was denied entry by immigration officials and was captured in Pakistan in December of 2001.