



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on May 29, 2009

## Abu Ghraib's Suppressed Rape, Abuse Photos

One of America's own generals, recently retired Major-General Taguba even [admitted to the \*London Daily Telegraph\*](#) that "these pictures show torture, abuse, rape and every indecency." If our own generals are confirming the nature of the photos, the denial is going to be pretty tough.

So how is White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs denying it? Gibbs [told reporters at a press briefing](#) that "the article is wrong and mischaracterizes the photos that are in question.... None of the photographs in question depict the images described in the article. Again, I think if you do an even moderate Google search, you're not going to find many of these newspapers and truth within, say, 25 words of each other."



Such a carefully parsed denial could be seen as a non-denial. It is possible that there are two entirely different sets of abusive photographs, based upon Gibbs' non-denial denial. And it's hardly surprising to hear that Gibbs, a press secretary for the liberal-left Obama administration, would criticize the *London Daily Telegraph*, the major conservative newspaper in Britain. But the Pentagon came out with another non-categorical denial: "None of the photos in question depict the images that are described in that article," Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman [told the press on May 28](#).

The Pentagon also used the phrase "photos in question." It reeks of public affairs-coached talking points. Why not simply say that it didn't happen, if indeed it didn't happen? Why is it that such finely parsed denials seem like they are in search of an "out" by claiming later (should photos verifying the British newspaper's account eventually be published) that the feds were talking about a different set of photos than what the *London Daily Telegraph* was writing about?

As for the British newspapers being unreliable, the *Telegraph* followed up its original story [reiterating](#) that "Major General Antonio Taguba, a former senior US officer who conducted an internal inquiry at the prison [Abu Ghraib], confirmed that he had seen photos which appear to depict a soldier raping a female prisoner and a male translator raping a male prisoner as well as the use of objects in sexual abuse." And *Harper's* magazine contributor Scott Horton has [reported](#) he "has obtained specific corroboration of the British account, which appeared in the *London Daily Telegraph*, from several reliable sources, including a highly credible senior military officer with firsthand knowledge, who provided even more detail about the graphic photographs that have been withheld from the public by the Obama administration."

The rationale for suppressing the abuse photos, Obama [told the nation on May 13](#), was that "the most direct consequence of releasing them, I believe, would be to further inflame anti-American opinion and to put our troops in greater danger." Former Vice President Dick Cheney weighed in with his first



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compliment of the Obama administration, [saying on May 21](#) that “in reversing his plan to release incendiary photos, he deserves our support.” Of course, if Obama and Cheney really had the safety of American soldiers as their first priority, the soldiers would already have been sent home from the Middle East.

Obama’s suppression of the photos has arguably made it more dangerous for soldiers serving in Iraq. Instead of releasing the photos into a one-day firestorm, Obama seems to want to fuel conspiracy theories about treatment in Abu Ghraib in the Muslim world. And if we’re still covering up what happened at Abu Ghraib, covering up worse things than those [crimes we’ve already acknowledged](#), Muslims around the world might reasonably ask: “What else is the U.S. covering up in other prisons?” Obama certainly didn’t heed the advice Jack Ryan [gave to the president in the movie \*Clear and Present Danger\*](#). Harrison Ford’s Jack Ryan [urged the president](#) to air all his dirty laundry up front in order to end persistent press speculation: “I would give them no place to go, nothing to report, no story. There’s no sense defusing a bomb after it’s already gone off.”

That advice, it’s now more than clear, is not the strategy President Obama is pursuing. Instead, the Obama administration is fueling endless headlines, speculation, and conspiracy theories about the photos. It’s hard to believe they think that Al Jazeera and the rest of the Arab press doesn’t know about the *Telegraph* story yet. (Hint: they do know.) So Obama is allowing the story to perpetuate, with fresh headlines every time a new witness chimes in and each gory new detail is revealed — day after day, week after week, month after month.

And stories of electrical shocks, rape, homosexual rape, and other tortures at Abu Ghraib have long circulated around the Muslim world from prominent sources. Former Iraqi Foreign Ministry Official Firas al-Sammarrai [will speak in Egypt next week](#) about his electrical shock treatment at the hands of U.S. interrogators. Muhammad Ali of Fallujah province [told Reuters wire service this week](#) that “I was sat on the floor. (They) would beat me two at a time. They put cigarettes out on me and threw cold water on me. That lasted for two days,” he said, adding that he needed surgery to heal his stomach after the beatings. And other eyewitnesses such as [Kasim Mehaddi Hilas](#) have already testified to the homosexual rape of teenage boys at Abu Ghraib. If the photos show rape, then they won’t show anything that the Muslim world doesn’t already believe.

The Muslim world already believes that the United States has committed every manner of atrocity against Iraqis, and Obama’s suppression of the photos have led to a worldwide media sensation, a widespread belief that the Muslim world’s suspicions are right. And indeed, they may be right. But suppressing the photos couldn’t make the United States look worse in the eyes of the world than it already does. It couldn’t possibly make the rest of the world more angry at American soldiers than they already are.

The only reason not to release the photos is if the victims themselves request that they do not have their privacy violated. Few rape victims, male or female, want such documentation in the public domain. They have a right to privacy that needs protecting.

But could releasing the photos put U.S. soldiers in more danger? No more than Obama already has.

**Update (Sunday, May 31):** *The New American’s* May 29 analysis (above) of the White House and Pentagon’s non-denial denials regarding rape photos appears to be vindicated by a May 30 Salon article (link [here](#)). The White House and Pentagon appear to be backing up to the fall-back position where they can claim they were talking about a different set of suppressed abuse photographs.



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**Related article (Monday, June 1):** [“Abuse Photo Controversy Reveals Obama Lies”](#)

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