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HOOD COMPLETES KORAN INQUIRY

Guantanamo Bay, Cuba -- Brigadier General Jay Hood, commander of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, completed his inquiry into the validity of allegations of Koran mishandling by U.S. personnel at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, yesterday.

The inquiry was prompted by allegations in the press that U.S. personnel at Guantanamo had flushed a Koran down a toilet. The inquiry found no credible evidence that a member of the Joint Task Force at Guantanamo Bay ever flushed a Koran down a toilet. Further, it revealed a consistent, documented policy of respectful handling of the Koran dating back almost two-and-a-half years.

The scope of the inquiry included;

- 1) Investigating the allegation that a U.S. service member flushed a Koran down a toilet.
- 2) Determining the documented procedures for handling a detainee's Koran from 2002 through the present.
- 3) Identifying and explaining incidents where JTF personnel failed to follow established procedures from 2002 through the present.
- 4) Determining how incidents, if any, were identified, investigated or resolved at the time.
- 5) Identifying if there are any deficiencies in the current procedures.

Over a period of three weeks, the inquiry team reviewed electronic and hard copy records maintained by the Joint Intelligence Group (JIG), Joint Detention Operations Group (JDOG), and Joint Task Force (JTF) staff.

"We reviewed every available detainee record," said Brig. Gen. Jay Hood, the commander of JTF Guantanamo. "We reviewed the paper files of detainees no longer at Guantanamo. The JIG search reviewed 25,000 documents. Additionally, the inquiry team reviewed approximately 6,000 scanned documents for content relating to the Koran. The JTF-GTMO public and shared computer drives in both classified and unclassified systems,

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including all temporary files, were searched for any Koran related incidents. We also reviewed sixty-three Habeas petitions for any mention of incidents involving the Koran. Finally, we reviewed the allegations made in thirty-eight press articles.”

Again, the inquiry found no credible evidence that a member of the Joint Task Force at Guantanamo Bay ever flushed a Koran down a toilet. This matter is considered closed.

Since Korans were first issued to detainees (JAN 02), the JTF has issued more than 1600 copies, conducted more than 28,000 interrogations, and thousands of cell moves during which detainee effects, including Korans, were moved. From those activities, the inquiry team identified 19 incidents involving Koran handling by JTF personnel.

Ten of these incidents did not involve mishandling the Koran. They involved the touching of a Koran during the normal performance of duty.

“With the other nine incidents, there was either intentional or unintentional mishandling of a Koran,” said Hood. “We defined mishandling as touching, holding or the treatment of a Koran in a manner inconsistent with policy or procedure. We have confirmed that five of these alleged mishandling incidents took place. After thoroughly investigating the four remaining alleged mishandling incidents, we cannot determine conclusively if they actually happened.”

“Mishandling a Koran at Guantanamo Bay is a rare occurrence. Mishandling of a Koran here is never condoned,” said Hood. “When one considers the many thousands of times detainees have been moved and cells have been searched since detention operations first began here in January 2002, I think one can only conclude that respect for detainee religious beliefs was embedded in the culture of the JTF from the start.”

In the course of the inquiry, 15 incidents were identified where detainees mishandled Korans. These included using a Koran as a pillow, ripping pages out of the Koran, attempting to flush a Koran down the toilet, and urinating on the Koran.

Hood also concluded that the Koran handling policy now in force is appropriate, though a number of recommendations for minor modifications are under review. Since the early days of detention operations at Guantanamo, military leaders set in place procedures to help ensure respect for the cultural dignity of the Koran and the detainee’s practice of faith. These issues were discussed with the ICRC to help ensure the detainees were able to practice their faith and included calls to prayer over the public address system five times a day and storage to protect the cultural dignity of the Koran. Detainees are provided culturally appropriate meals and items necessary in the observance of their chosen faith. Also, arrows are stenciled on the floor to point towards Mecca.

The practices for handling the Koran were codified in the January 19, 2003, policy letter. This guidance has served as the basis for Koran handling procedures in every subsequent edition of the Joint Task Force Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), including the current one dated 01 FEB 05.

For further information on the specific incidents identified in the report, refer to the accompanying documents that provide information for each occurrence. In addition, the JTF's current Koran Handling Procedures are provided.

[Enclosure 1: Description of Incidents](#)

[Enclosure 2: Excerpts from Joint Task Force Guantanamo, Standard Operating Procedures, Dated 01 FEB 05T](#)

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