

250 former Iraq detainees claim torture in new US lawsuit

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More than 250 people once held in Iraqi prisons, including the notorious Abu Ghraib, have filed suit against a US military contractor for their alleged torture, attorneys said Tuesday.

The Center for Constitutional Rights said a lawsuit was filed in US federal court on Monday asking for millions of dollars in compensatory and punitive damages against CACI International Inc. of Arlington, Virginia.

The complaint, filed in the name 256 former detainees who were released without ever being charged with a crime, alleges that CACI interrogators who were sent to Iraqi prisons directed and engaged in torture between 2003-2004.

The lawsuit charges that the detainees were repeatedly beaten, sodomized, threatened with rape, kept naked in their cells, subjected to electric shock and attacked by unmuzzled dogs, among other humiliations.

The court action also names two CACI employees -- Stephen Stefanowski, known as Big Steve, and Daniel Johnson, known as DJ -- accusing them of participating in the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

The two contractors allegedly directed corporal Charles Graner, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison for this role in the Abu Ghraib scandal, and sergeant Ivan Frederick, who is serving an eight-year jail term, according to the lawsuit.

"These corporate guys worked in a conspiracy with those military guys to torture people," Susan Burke, the lead attorney in the case, told AFP.

"And now the military have been held accountable, but the company guys and the company have not been," she said.

The complaint is the latest against CACI, which has faced lawsuits since 2004. A previous class-action lawsuit was rejected by a court.