

File Reference

13 May 2004

ACGS

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PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT ON THE HOODING OF PRISONERS

With reference to your correspondence requesting information on the issue of 'hooding'. We are currently collating the audit trail to provide a comprehensive response to your question; on S of S's statement suggests that the 'hooding' of prisoners was being practised in Iraq prior to Sept 03. Is this correct and who gave authority to hood prisoners?

In the meantime, from personal recollection as GOC (1 Div) and given the information that PJHQ has available today, please see below the answer the your request.

Hooding of PWs, internees and detainees took place from the start of Op TELIC.

During OP TELIC Phase III, the 'hooding' of PWs, internees and detainees by our forces attracted the attention of the international media and the ICRC. At the end of April 03, ICRC advice was that this practice should stop and, other than for particular individual cases, 'hooding' ceased.

Following the death in custody of an Iraqi on 15 Sep 03, it became apparent that hooding had resumed at some point. The Chief Joint Operations (CJO) then reviewed the use of 'hooding'. CJO's staff examined this issue, particularly with Legal advice and in accepting advice CJO decided that the practice of 'hooding' should stop. Accordingly, the then GOC MND (South East) directed troops to immediately cease the 'hooding' of all persons detained for whatever purpose.

Notwithstanding this direction, 'blindfolding' was considered an acceptable alternative to 'hooding' on the basis that it will only be used for the sole purpose of offering:

- a. security to our own forces and locations.
- b. protection to the detainee (through prevention of identification by other detainees).

As an alternative option, forces were instructed that they may 'blindfold' detainees but only in the circumstances recorded above, subject to the conditions on the ground. 'Blindfolding' was used only for the minimum period necessary and the physical condition of the blindfolded detainees was regularly assessed. This change in practice offers firm protection of the rights of those detained as well as to UK forces, from those who might accuse our troops, singularly or collectively, of carrying out acts which are illegal under Geneva Conventions III and IV.