

Senators add torture ban to spending bill: Legislators defy president

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The U.S. Senate has defied President Bush, voting overwhelmingly to amend a Pentagon spending bill to ban “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” of anyone in U.S. military custody. The amendment passed October 5 on a 90-9 vote. All nine who opposed it are Republicans.

The bill comes in response to hundreds of reports of torture and abuse—documented by the Red Cross and the military itself—at U.S. facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan and at the army base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Such cases gained prominence after photographs and reports of sexual abuse of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad caused a scandal.

The White House has opposed the effort to ban some techniques that it does not consider torture, such as stripping prisoners naked, threatening them with dogs, humiliating them and forcing them to stand or crouch in uncomfortable positions for long periods of time. Such techniques are necessary for the military to coax information about terrorism from prisoners, the administration claims.

The House had already passed a version of the military funding bill that does not include the antiabuse provision. A House-Senate conference committee was to determine whether it will remain in the final bill. *-Associated Baptist Press*