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Afghan teenagers claim abuse at a US prison

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Two Afghan teenagers held in a prison in northern Kabul say they have been abused by US forces in Afghanistan, The Washington Post has reported.

In an article published on Friday, the newspaper said the Afghan teens had been held in solitary confinement in concrete cells for at least two weeks while undergoing daily interrogation about their alleged links to the Taliban.

The two Afghans said they were beaten by American guards, photographed naked and deprived of sleep during their detention at Bagram airbase.

According to the article, the two teenagers, Issa Mohammad, 17, and Abdul Rashid, (who claimed to be under the age of 16), said they were punched and slapped in the face by American guards during their incarceration.

Obama had promised to put an end to the harsh interrogation methods previously authorized by the Bush administration.

The facility described by the two Afghans appears to be a holding center run by US Special Operations forces on a different part of the Bagram base, the main American-run prison, the paper noted.

Defense Department spokesman Lt. Col. Mark Wright said all prisoners in Afghanistan are treated "humanely" and in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and US law.

"Department of Defense policy is and always has been to treat detainees humanely. There have been well-documented instances in which that policy was not followed, and service members have been held accountable for their actions in those cases," he said.

Jonathan Horowitz, who works on detention issues in Afghanistan for the Open Society Institute, said: "These allegations of physical and mental abuse at a secretive facility are, if true, patently unacceptable and must be investigated."

The Washington Post says there have been different reports about the existence of an interrogation facility at Bagram run by Special Operations forces, but little has been revealed about living conditions or interrogation methods there. The International Committee of the Red Cross has been demanding access to the facility and to the detainees there but thus far, its requests have not been granted.