

REALLY BAD GITMO PROPAGANDA

The increasingly valuable WikiLeaks reveals that a Mass Communications Specialist at Gitmo has been altering Wikipedia and other web resources to hide detainee numbers and otherwise counter reports of poor conditions at the prison.

The US detention facility at Guantanamo Bay has been caught conducting covert propaganda attacks on the internet. The attacks, exposed this week in a report by the government transparency group Wikileaks, include deleting detainee ID numbers from Wikipedia last month, the systematic posting of unattributed "self praise" comments on news organization web sites in response to negative press, boosting pro-Guantanamo stories on the internet news site Digg and even modifying Fidel Castro's encyclopedia article to describe the Cuban president as "an admitted transexual" [sic].

Shayana Kadidal, Managing Attorney of the Center for Constitutional Rights Guantanamo Global Justice Initiative, said in response to the report:

"The military's efforts to alter the record by vandalizing Wikipedia are of a piece with the amateurism of their other public relations efforts: [such as] their ridiculous claims that released detainees who criticize the United States in the media have 'returned to the battlefield'."

We finally got rid of Karen Hughes as Chief Propaganda Specialist. But we've apparently got some schmo in Cuba trying to pitch Castro as a transsexual.

Stuff like this always reminds me of my discovery, as a college professor, that most

Americans have the crudest understanding of how language works. I can't decide how to judge the trade-off. It means our government rarely gets away with propaganda. But it also reflects a widespread inability to think critically.