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## Family claims mistreatment of soldier at Fort Sill

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**OKLAHOMA CITY** - Military officials are mistreating convicted Army deserter Camilo Mejia at the Fort Sill correctional facility where he's being held, his attorney and family members said Thursday.

Mejia, a 28-year-old Iraqi war veteran, is not being allowed to speak to his family in Spanish, his native language, read his mail or give interviews to the media, his attorney, Louis Font of Brookline, Mass., said.

"What they're trying to do is isolate Private Mejia and break his will," Font said at a news conference. "He's being singled out for harsher treatment than others."

A spokesman at Fort Sill said security guidelines at the correctional facility restrict inmates from speaking to visitors in foreign languages and that Mejia is not being treated differently than any other prisoner.

"Private Mejia has been sent to Fort Sill, where he is being treated just as any other inmate," said Marcello Bruni, a Fort Sill media relations officer. "There is no evidence of mistreatment."

Bruni said mail addressed to all inmates is opened before being delivered and that requests for media interviews of prisoners are rarely granted.

"If there are requests for interviews that would benefit both the Army and the prisoner, then we would consider that," Bruni said. "So far, we haven't had any such requests that would fall into that category."

Mejia was convicted of desertion in a military court in Fort Stewart, Ga., on May 21 after refusing to return to his Florida National Guard unit after a two-week leave in October.

He was sentenced to a year in a military prison, received a dishonorable discharge and was reduced in rank from a staff sergeant to a private.

On Wednesday, a closed hearing was held at Fort Sill on Mejia's request for status as a conscientious objector. A military hearings officer from Fort Stewart presided over the hearing and heard testimony from Mejia and several character witnesses.

Mejia and his attorneys have argued that the horrors of war and his experiences during his 5 1/2 months in Iraq made him a conscientious objector.

Among those testifying Wednesday was Daniel Ellsberg, a former military analyst who leaked the 1971 Pentagon Papers, a top secret study of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

A report from Wednesday's hearing will be forwarded to the Department of the Army, which will make the final determination. If the military approves his request, his sentence and discharge status could be modified.