

Secret Bush-era memos released

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Nine secret legal memos that show President George W. Bush's broad interpretation of presidential power were released by the Obama administration.

The memos made public Monday include a 2001 opinion authorizing the military to treat terrorist suspects in the United States as if they were an invading army that had no constitutional rights, the Chicago Tribune reported Tuesday.

The rationale, encompassed in a memo written six weeks after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, would have meant U.S. soldiers could search houses and seize suspected terrorists without a court-approved warrant, the Tribune said. The military never used that power, a Bush administration lawyer told the newspaper, but the memo provided a legal basis for some administration officials wanting to use the military to arrest al-Qaida suspects in the United States, he said.

Another memo helped establish the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, prison policy by asserting Bush had "the exclusive authority" to decide how prisoners would be detained.

The Bush administration had refused to make any of the memos public.

The memos also indicate that five days before Bush left office, the Justice Department issued a secret

retraction of some of the departments' most sweeping definitions of presidential authority.

Obama and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder had pledged to release the secret Bush-era memos, a move the American Civil Liberties Union officials praised, but noted "dozens of still-secret legal memos related to interrogation, detention, rendition, surveillance and other Bush administration policies that are still being withheld."

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