

By Associated Press

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CHICAGO — A federal appeals court in Chicago has ruled that two American contractors allegedly tortured by U.S. forces in Iraq can't sue former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

The 8-3 decision by the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reverses a ruling by a three-judge panel of the same court.

Donald Vance and Nathan Ertel claim in their lawsuit that U.S. forces detained them in 2006 after they alleged illegal activities by their Iraqi-owned employer.

The majority opinion says there's nothing in law granting them rights to sue Rumsfeld or others in the line of military command. It says subjecting those in the command chain to such lawsuits could hamper military effectiveness.

The ruling adds that making defense secretaries liable for damages could unduly distract them from their critical public duties.