

16 Japanese men barred from U.S. for atrocities

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The Justice Department yesterday barred 16 Japanese men from ever entering the United States because they conducted inhumane medical experiments and ran forced-sex centers for the Imperial Army during World War II.

The men were the first Japanese placed on the government's "watch list" since it was established in 1979 to keep out people who committed acts of persecution on behalf of Nazi Germany or any of its allies during the war.

More than 60,000 persons associated with Nazi persecution in the

European theater of the war have been placed on the list since that time, including Kurt Waldheim, a former U.N. secretary-general and former president of Austria. The list has prevented more than 100 suspected persecutors from entering the United States since 1989, when records began to be kept.

"A veritable explosion in interest in these crimes on the part of scholars and the international human rights community made it possible to conclusively identify suspects," said Eli M. Rosenbaum, director of Justice's Office of Spe-

cial Investigations, which hunts Nazis in this country and enforces the law that established the list.

Some of the men being barred from entering the United States were members of "Unit 731," an infamous Japanese army detachment in Manchuria that conducted inhumane and frequently lethal pseudo-medical experiments, including vivisection without anesthesia, on thousands of non-volunteer prisoners of war and civilians, the Justice Department said, citing documentation from U.S. and Japanese publications.

The other men are suspected of

involvement in the Imperial Army's establishment and use of so-called "comfort woman stations," where hundreds of thousands of Korean and other Asian women were forced to have sexual relations with army officers and enlisted men, the department said.

Women and girls were taken principally from Korea, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Burma and what is now Indonesia and held captive in the "comfort stations," the government said.

A 1994 report, "Comfort Women," issued by the International Commission of Jurists in

Geneva, said these women "were beaten and tortured in addition to being repeatedly raped day after day by officers and soldiers."

Only a few of those responsible have been tried, all by the Dutch for victimizing Dutch women in Indonesia.

In response to demands from international women's and human rights groups, the Japanese government investigated and in 1992 released documents that confirmed the official involvement of the Japanese army in the operation of "comfort women" stations, the Justice Department said.