

Torture Report Exposes Sadism and Lies

The stunning Senate Intelligence Committee report on torture and other sadistic treatment meted out to “war on terror” detainees has shredded the credibility of CIA apologists who claimed the “enhance interrogations” were carefully calibrated and humane, as ex-CIA analyst Melvin A. Goodman explains.

By Melvin A. Goodman

CIA Director John Brennan, having failed to block the release of the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report on torture and abuse, is now abetting the efforts of former CIA directors and deputy directors to rebut the report’s conclusions that the interrogation techniques amounted to sadism and that senior CIA officials lied to the White House, the Congress, and the Department of Justice about the effectiveness of the enhanced interrogation program.

Former CIA directors George Tenet and Michael Hayden and deputy directors John McLaughlin and Steve Kappes, who were guilty of past deceit on sensitive issues, have threatened to make documents available to undermine the findings of the Senate committee. The senior operations officer who ran the CIA’s torture and abuse program, Jose Rodriguez, has been permitted to write a book and a long essay in the *Washington Post* that argue the interrogation techniques were legal and effective. Their charges are completely spurious and their credibility is non-existent.

CIA directors Tenet and Hayden, who signed off on the enhanced interrogation program, were involved in numerous efforts to politicize the work of the CIA. In addition to deceiving the White House on the efficacy of the torture program, Tenet provided misinformation to the White House on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. His role on Iraqi WMD has been comprehensively and authoritatively documented in the reports of the Robb-Silberman Committee, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

In response to President George W. Bush’s demand for intelligence to make the case for war in Iraq, Tenet responded that it would be a “slam dunk” to do so. He resigned from the CIA in 2004 in order to avoid testifying to a series of congressional committees about his perfidy.

General Hayden’s record is similarly flawed. Even before taking over the CIA in 2006, Hayden was the director of the National Security Agency’s warrantless eavesdropping program that began after 9/11. This program violated the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 and the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution that prohibits unlawful seizures and searches.

At the CIA, Hayden named John Rizzo as the Agency's general counsel although he knew that Rizzo had been the CIA's leading lawyer in pursuing legal justification for torture and abuse of terrorist suspects. Fortunately, Senator Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, who led the way in making sure that the CIA could not redact key aspects of the torture report, blocked the confirmation of Rizzo, who eventually withdrew his nomination.

Hayden also weakened the Office of the Inspector General, which had been critical of the CIA's renditions and interrogations programs, and even targeted the IG himself, John Helgerson, who had recommended accountability boards for CIA officers involved in the 9/11 intelligence failure, torture and abuse, and illegal renditions.

Deputy directors McLaughlin and Kappes also misled senior U.S. officials on key intelligence issues. McLaughlin, who actually delivered the "slam dunk" briefing to President Bush that CIA Director Tenet had promised, misled Secretary of State Colin Powell on the intelligence that became part of Powell's speech to the United Nations in February 2003 to make the case for war in Iraq.

In addition to perverting the intelligence process, McLaughlin tried to silence the chief of the Iraq Survey Group, David Kay, who found no evidence of Iraqi WMD. McLaughlin was also a key advocate for the notorious "Curveball," whose phony intelligence on mobile biological laboratories ended up in Powell's speech to the UN. Earlier in his career, McLaughlin had a key role in covering up the efforts of CIA deputy Robert Gates to politicize key intelligence in the 1980s.

Kappes may not have been involved in all of the decisions on torture and abuse and the secret prisons where the sadistic activity took place, but he was totally witting of the program. The Senate report cites the efforts of senior CIA leaders to impede the work of the Office of the Inspector General, and Kappes was a key part of this effort.

Kappes's career eventually suffered from briefing the White House on a Jordanian agent who was going to lead the CIA to al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri; the agent turned out to be a suicide bomber who decimated the leadership of the most sensitive CIA facility in Afghanistan in 2009.

Jose Rodriguez, like Kappes, was particularly hostile to the statutory IG, John Helgerson, and the work of the OIG on the enhanced interrogation techniques. Rodriguez, who destroyed 92 torture tapes over the objections of the White House, contends that the interrogation techniques were "blessed by the highest legal authorities in the land, conducted by trained professionals, and applied to only a handful of the most important terrorists on the planet." The Senate report puts the lie to all of these contentions.

It is unfortunate that the Obama administration did not appoint a special prosecutor in order to get some accountability for the heinous crimes that were committed by senior CIA officials or the kind of truth and reconciliation committee that has proved useful in East Europe or South Africa where terrible crimes have been committed. Nevertheless, the Senate's authoritative report gives a full description of the unconscionable activities that took place in the name of the United States and offers sufficient evidence to block the outrageous efforts of former CIA directors and deputy directors to deceive the American people.

Melvin A. Goodman is senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and professor of government at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *The Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* and *National Insecurity: The Cost of American Militarism* and the forthcoming *The Path to Dissent: The Story of a CIA Whistleblower* (City Lights Publishers, 2015).
