

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/torture-and-the-cia/?print=1>

Torture and the CIA

By Philip Giraldi

May 23, 2012 @ 5:22 am In | [No Comments](#)

Former CIA Deputy Director for Operations Jose Rodriguez has written a book with the assistance of former Agency press officer Bill Harlow. [Hard Measures: How Aggressive CIA Actions After 9/11 Saved American Lives](#) ^[1] is largely a defense of Rodriguez's role in the CIA's use of torture on suspected terrorists in the aftermath of 9/11. Rodriguez argues that what he describes as "enhanced interrogation techniques" were necessary to obtain information on terrorist activities. His employment of the euphemism underscores his argument that these procedures were found to be legal by Bush administration lawyers and that they do not constitute torture, which is a war crime.

In November 2005, Rodriguez, who was a classmate of mine at CIA, ordered on his own authority and contrary to Agency general counsel advice the destruction of 92 videotapes that recorded interrogation sessions in a secret prison in Thailand. This was done, he says, to protect the identities of CIA interrogators from possible reprisals by terrorists, not to cover-up waterboarding being used to obtain information, a procedure he claims was both an acceptable interrogation technique and one that was subject to congressional oversight before it was employed. He does not explain exactly how terrorists could obtain the tapes or be able to make identifications from them; perhaps the idea is that someday the recordings might leak to the public. Whatever its plausibility, or lack thereof, his argument might just as well be a deliberate deception if the primary purpose of his actions was to eliminate evidence of what many would consider a war crime. I leave it up to the reader to decide what explanation is most likely. For what it's worth, Amazon [reviews](#) ^[1] are running about five to one in praise of the book rather than condemning what it describes.

To promote *Hard Measures*, Rodriguez has been appearing on a number of television programs. I have seen him on “60 Minutes”^[2] with Lesley Stahl and on Bill O’Reilly’s program^[3]. He has also appeared with Sean Hannity^[4]. Stahl failed to push Rodriguez on the illegality of torture and frequently allowed him to drift into the kind of mumbo-jumbo tradecraft language that we former spies use when we don’t want to answer a question. Rodriguez stated that we (CIA) are part of the “dark side — that’s what we do.” That was the end of the story for “60 Minutes.”

O’Reilly’s interview was somewhat different. Rodriguez seemed unsure of himself, sometimes inarticulate, and was helped along to make the point that the information obtained from enhanced interrogation could not have been obtained any other way. O’Reilly walked him through his assertion that then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi knew all about the waterboarding, but then brought up the account^[5] of the interrogation of Abu Zubaydah presented by^[6] FBI Special Agent Ali Soufan. Soufan, a member of the interrogation team and Arabic speaker, maintains, with considerable credibility backed up by documents, that the only good information obtained came through established interrogation techniques employed before any torture took place. Rodriguez denied that was so to O’Reilly and became hung up on a discussion of who played the lead role in the interrogation, the CIA or the FBI, before questioning Soufan’s personal history and his reliability as a source.

Agency operations in Afghanistan in 2001-2 were superbly conceived and executed by its Counterterrorism Center, where Rodriguez was deputy, but his book inevitably focuses on trying to defend the indefensible practices that followed. There has been considerable speculation over why the book, with its attendant media blitz, has come out now, in light of the fact that the manuscript had to be approved by the Agency’s Publications Review Board. Was there CIA collusion in its release? Though the review is only supposed to prevent security violations, the Agency tends to be very friendly and helpful to books depicting it in positive terms and hostile to anything perceived as critical. Given the upcoming presidential elections, *Hard Measures* is also being seen by some as a preemption of any attempt to turn the torture issue into a political football, particularly as Mitt Romney has explicitly approved^[7] of the practice. Rodriguez (and the Agency) might be attempting to backstop the Romney position, which otherwise could be difficult to defend.

Another theory is that the long-awaited Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report on CIA interrogation techniques is about to come out and will conclude that the enhanced procedures were, in fact, ineffective. Rodriguez’s account might be intended to stake out a position in advance implying that the Senate report, written by a Democratic majority committee, is politically motivated and therefore “flawed.”

What is most disturbing to me about the book and the interviews is that Rodriguez is apparently seen by some in the media as the “new normal” and even some kind of hero. CIA officers overseas are indeed operating on the “dark side,” in that spying overseas is illegal in the countries where one is operationally engaged. But that does not mean all gloves are off in terms of international and U.S. law, especially in the case of war crimes. It is worth noting that Japanese Army officers were executed in 1946 for waterboarding Allied prisoners, while the Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution explicitly forbids “cruel and unusual

punishment.” The United States is also a signatory to the International Convention on Torture and to the Geneva Conventions. And then there is the [War Crimes Act of 1996](#) ^[8], which requires the United States Justice Department to prosecute anyone involved in torture, no exceptions. President Obama has refused to permit justice to be served, making him as complicit in war crimes as his predecessor was.

Rodriguez presents himself and his “dark side” persona as representative of CIA thinking about the proper way to fight terrorism, but that is just not so. The assumption that there is broad support inside the Agency for the use of torture presumes that anyone working there was ever actually asked for an opinion. The CIA undoubtedly has a peculiar culture that breeds an us-against-them mentality, but I would guess that few employees would have supported waterboarding if they had known it was occurring. The procedure was top secret inside the Agency, a clear indication that even the upper echelons of CIA management knew that it was at best questionable. The impression that CIA, which has something like 20,000 employees, marches in lockstep as some kind of secret army is ridiculous. Nobody checks his or her conscience at the door when entering the building. Agency analysts resisted endorsing the false intelligence used to justify war with Iraq, and they continue to hold the line against a conflict with Iran. I would also note the large number of former intelligence officers who have become outspoken in the antiwar movement: Ray McGovern, Michael Scheuer, Paul Pillar, Bill and Kathleen Christison, and Flynt and Hillary Mann Leverett.

Rodriguez might find comfort in his *apologia pro vita sua*, but I rather suspect his is a voice in the wilderness. Thankfully, I do not know anyone inside the intelligence community who considers torture morally acceptable under any circumstances, and most intelligence officers would regard its use *ipso facto* as an egregious failure. Secret prisons, renditions, and enhanced interrogations are characteristic of police states, not constitutional republics. Thirty-six years ago Rodriguez and I together took an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States of America. Today he would be well advised to remember that moment.