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What Bush-Cheney-Obama Don't Want Known on Torture

By: Nat Hentoff

December 26, 2012.

As I've reported, it will take months before the Senate Intelligence Committee will let you know at least some of its 6,000-page report on the tortures (officially masked as "enhanced interrogation techniques") committed by the U.S., but especially by the CIA, after 9/11. The report must first be reviewed by the president, the executive branch and — wow — the CIA itself.

As committee chair Sen. Dianne Feinstein explained, the report to be reviewed includes "the accuracy — or inaccuracy — of CIA descriptions about the program" ("In the Dark on Torture," *New York Daily News* editorial, Dec. 19).

Can you imagine how objectively the CIA will perform that task? Listen to CIA Acting Director Michael J. Morell's immediate response to the report by telling the CIA workforce how "very proud" he is of their "courage and commitment" and expressing his admiration for Sen. Feinstein's assurance that the "report is 'open to revision'" ("CIA Director Reacts to Report Critical of Detainee Interrogations," Scott Shane, *The New York Times*, Dec. 14).

This reminded me that while I was writing many columns on how this nation has violated international treaties and its own laws against torture, FBI agents who witnessed actual CIA brutality and torture against suspects complained to FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C.

I often criticize FBI invasions of our privacy, but the FBI does not torture.

And while we wait to see something of the Senate Intelligence Committee's three years of research, there are already cracks in the present secrecy. President Barack Obama is furious at "leaks" and other ways of piercing classified information, but he's the one who specializes in keeping us citizens in the dark.

The Washington Post's Greg Miller leapt over secrecy in a recent story: "Officials familiar with the report said it makes a detailed case that subjecting prisoners to 'enhanced' interrogation techniques did not help the CIA find Osama bin Laden and often were counterproductive in the broader campaign against al-Qaeda" ("Report finds harsh CIA interrogations ineffective," Greg Miller, *The Washington Post*, Dec. 13).

And on *The Ed Show*, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, who was chief of staff for former Secretary of State Colin Powell, said the Senate report — if we're allowed to see this part of it — will show "none of this enhanced interrogation worked" ("Wilkerson: Secret report confirms torture didn't work," Steve Frank, tv.msnbc.com, Dec. 12).

Wilkerson told host Ed Schultz that among his "expert" sources of this conclusion are former FBI agent Ali Soufan and former CIA agent Glenn Carle.

Wilkerson went on to say — and I disagree with him on this — "If we're not going to hold people accountable, we should at least let the American people know what was done in their name that basically constituted war crimes."

First of all, as I've shown again and again from the texts of international treaties and our very own laws, they WERE war crimes. And why on earth is the American rule of law not required to insist that these are war criminals — not just those at the CIA, but the very Washington officials who authorized their crimes — and they too should be held accountable?

I in no way consider George W. Bush an evil person — quite the contrary — but he was abominably misadvised by Dick Cheney and others in his administration. For instance, Dick "The Dark Side" Cheney is on record as maintaining that waterboarding, which imminently threatens a suspect with asphyxiation, is not torture.

Try it for real — up to a point — Mr. Cheney.

If you don't want to wait until Obama and the CIA tell the Senate Intelligence Committee what you may be permitted to see in the "Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation," you are entitled, as a self-governing citizen of this republic, to buy *The Torture Report: What the Documents Say about America's Post-9/11 Torture Program*, by Larry Siems, lead author of this extensively documented ACLU investigation (OR Books, 2012).

There's also *The United States and Torture: Interrogation, Incarceration and Abuse*, edited by Marjorie Cohn (NYU Press, 2012), a collection whose chapters contain unforgettable illuminations of the very darkest side of our history. These include Jane Mayer's Feb. 2005 *New Yorker* article, "Outsourcing Torture: The secret history of America's 'extraordinary rendition'

program” and Jeanne Mirer’s “The Law of Torture and Accountability of Lawyers Who Sanction It.”

And for further education that the new generation and those who follow are vitally entitled to keep in mind when questioning the core principles and values of future candidates for public office, there is: *Administration of Torture: A Documentary Record from Washington to Abu Ghraib and Beyond* by the ACLU’s Jameel Jaffer and Amrit Singh (Columbia University Press, 2009). This book contains hundreds of government documents pertaining not only to the CIA, but many by the Defense Department itself.

It includes — dig this — autopsy reports “of detainees” that state, among other examples, “contusions and broken ribs support a traumatic cause of death and therefore the manner of death is best classified as homicide.”

So is there still to be no “looking backward,” President Obama? And will we eventually hear from the Supreme Court? Did you hear anything of this during the recent presidential debates?

Do you remember when President Bush said this on June 22, 2004: “I have never ordered torture ... The values of this country are such that torture is not a part of our soul and our being” (“The Torture Report”).

If you get a chance to read the Senate report or any of these books, what will you find in your soul about being an American?