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US Globalized Torture Black Sites

By Stephen Lendman

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On October 5, US Delta Force commandos, CIA operatives, and FBI agents abducted Abu Anas al-Liby. Doing so highlights what's been out-of-control since 9/11.

In the 1980s, al-Liby was one of many CIA-recruited mujahideen fighters. They were used against Afghanistan's Soviet occupiers.

Ronald Reagan called them "the moral equivalent of our founding fathers." He characterized Contra killers the same way.

Bin Laden, al-Liby, and many other Al Qaeda fighters were used strategically as both allies and enemies. Most recently, al-Liby was an anti-Gaddafi "freedom fighter."

In 2000, he was indicted for his alleged role in bombing US Kenyan and Tanzanian embassies in 1998.

He was one of the FBI's most wanted. He had a \$5 million bounty on his head. Washington abducted him lawlessly. It did so on Libyan territory.

US policy is out-of-control. Obama authorizes whatever he wants anywhere worldwide. Rogue leaders operate that way.

On October 8, AP headlined "Did Obama Swap 'Black' Detention sites for ships?"

He ordered alleged “terrorists (interrogated) for as long as it takes aboard US naval vessels.” Al-Libi is held on the USS San Antonio. It’s an amphibious warship.

Throughout his tenure, Obama continued the worst of odious Bush administration practices. The Clinton administration began them. Guilt or innocence doesn’t matter. Suspects are lawlessly abducted.

They’re denied all rights. They’re held secretly at US black sites. Confessions are extracted through torture. Detainees say anything to stop pain.

Guantanamo is the tip of the iceberg. Dozens of US torture prisons operate globally. Afghanistan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and many other complicit US allies host them.

They permit indefinite detention, interrogations, torture and other forms of abuse.

They assist in capturing and transporting detainees. They allow use of their domestic airspace. They provide intelligence information.

America is by far the world’s leading human rights abuser. No nation in history matches its ruthlessness. It’s out-of-control. It’s unaccountable. It’s waging war on humanity. It’s doing it globally.

Reprieve is UK-based. It promotes rule of law accountability. It works to “secure each person’s right to a fair trial.” It tries to “save lives.”

In June 2008, it said America “may have used as many as 17 ships as floating prisons.”

“About 26,000 people are being (lawlessly) held by the US in secret prisons – a figure that includes land-based detention centers.”

“(I)nformation suggests up to 80,000 have been ‘through the system’ since 2001.”

So have thousands more under Obama.

Former Pentagon spokesman Navy Commander Jeffrey Gordon lied earlier, saying:

“We do not operate detention facilities on board Navy ships.” They’re in “Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay.”

They’re in at least 54 complicit countries. According to Reprieve:

“Prison ships have been used by the US to hold terror suspects illegally since the days of President Clinton.”

“US government sources have confirmed that both the USS Bataan and the USS Peleliu have been used to hold prisoners.”

“Reprieve investigations suggest that a further 15 ships have been used to hold prisoners beyond the rule of law since 2001.”

They’re “interrogated aboard the vessels and then rendered to other, often undisclosed, locations.”

Reprieve legal director Clive Stafford later said:

“(W)e’ve identified thirty-two prison ships, sort of prison hulks you used to read about in Victorian England, which have been converted to hold prisoners, and we’ve got pictures of them in Lisbon Harbor, for example.”

“And these are holding prisoners around the world, as well. And there’s a bunch of proxy prisons – (in) Morocco, Egypt, Jordan and other countries – where this stuff is going on.”

“And this is a huge concern, because the world focus is on Guantanamo Bay, which really is a diversionary tactic in the whole war of terror or war on terror, whatever you’d like to call it.”

“And actually, most of these people who have been severed from their legal rights are in these other secret prisons around the world.”

According to a former detainee:

“One of my fellow prisoners in Guantanamo was at sea on an American ship before coming to Guantanamo.”

“He was in the cage next to me. He told me that there were about 50 other prisoners on the ship.”

“They were all closed off in the bottom of the ship. The prisoner commented to me that it was like something you see on TV.”

“The people held on the ship were beaten even more severely than in Guantanamo.”

Reprieve calls the USS Bataan one of America’s “most infamous ‘floating prisons.’ ”

John Walker Lindh was sent there. So was Australian David Hicks. Lindh was maliciously called the “American Taliban.”

Hicks was sold to US forces for bounty. Both men were lawlessly held. They were brutally tortured. Thousands of others have been treated the same way.

Obama promised to end lawless Bush administration practices. They continue out-of-control.

America's war on terror authorizes anything goes. On September 18, 2001, Congress passed a joint House-Senate Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) for "the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States."

On October 26, Patriot Act lawlessness followed. On November 13, Military Order Number 1 authorized the president to capture, kidnap or otherwise arrest non-citizens anywhere in the world for any reason.

US citizens are now vulnerable. Anyone can be arrested or abducted. They can be held indefinitely without charge, evidence, due process, trial, or other judicial fairness protections.

Torture is official US policy. Bush established it. On September 17, 2001, he signed a secret finding.

It authorized the CIA to "Capture, Kill, or Interrogate Al-Queda Leaders."

It mandated establishing secret global facilities to detain and interrogate them. Doing so without guidelines on proper treatment was OK'd.

Detainees were declared "unlawful enemy combatants." Obama calls them "unprivileged enemy belligerents."

He authorized their murder or capture and indefinite detention. Torture remains official US policy. The worst of Bush administration practices continue.

International, constitutional and US statute laws no longer apply. Diktat power replaced them. Today's America reflects out-of-control lawlessness.

In 2007, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) published a report titled "Off the Record: US Responsibility for Enforced Disappearances in the 'War on Terror.' "

It discussed ghost detainees held in secret black sites. It revealed how America lawlessly uses "proxy detention."

It demonstrates that "far from targeting the 'worst of the worst,' the system sweeps up low-level detainees and even involves the detention of the wives and children of the 'disappeared.' "

Doing so violates core rule of law principles. CCR documented torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Obama continues the worst of Bush administration policies.

Separately, CCR discussed ghost detainees and black sites. Forced disappearance victims became "ghosts."

"Black sites" are secret US prisons operating globally – on land and at sea.

“What is ‘enforced disappearance,’ ” asked CCR? “Is it legal?”

The practice violates “numerous treaties binding on the United States” It spurns “international humanitarian law.”

It occurs when Washington “arrests, detains or abducts a person (without) acknowledg(ing) (having done so) or the location” where targeted individuals are detained.

Doing so denies them core legal protections. It’s official US policy. American citizens are vulnerable. No one anywhere is safe.

“What are conditions like in the ‘black sites,’ ” asked CCR?

CIA officials admit using so-called “enhanced interrogation (or ‘alternative interrogation’) techniques.”

Doing so constitutes the worst kind of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. Nothing too brutal is out of bounds. Virtually everything is OK.

Former detainees reveal horrific torture they experienced. They were fortunate to survive and be able to explain.

“What do CIA secret prisons have to do with other US detentions?”

Washington operates global black sites. It does so separately or jointly with host countries. It transfers some detainees to foreign-controlled facilities.

“In all cases, (they’re) deprived of any substantive protection of their rights, and reports of torture and abuse are common.”

“Who is held in CIA secret detention?”

Numerous individuals from many countries are targeted. Many were sold for bounty. Some were held because of mistaken identity. The great majority of victims committed no crimes.

Guilt or innocence doesn’t matter. Once abducted, all rights are lost. Boys young as seven were abducted.

“What should be done?”

Lawless abductions, secret detentions, torture and other forms of abuse violate core international, constitutional and US statute law provisions.

America remains unaccountable. So are complicit countries. CCR and other human rights organizations demand these practices cease. Obama pays them no heed.

“What is CCR doing about ghost detention?”

It filed lawsuits demanding release of information. It did so under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

It wants the shroud of secrecy removed. It largely remains. What’s known about Guantanamo diverts from full disclosure about America’s global black sites.

They hold the vast majority of US ghost detainees. They do so lawlessly. Globalized torture is official US policy. So are worldwide secret prisons.

Obama continues the worst Bush administration practices. He added more of his own. He governs by diktat authority. What he says goes.

He operates as judge, jury and executioner. He authorizes cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. He does so at home and abroad. It continues unabated. Millions are grievously harmed globally.

Rogue leaders govern this way. He’s Caligula writ large. He’s America’s worst ever. He threatens humanity’s survival. It may not survive on his watch.