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## The Torture Industry

Why Bush Administration Officials Must be Prosecuted

by RAHEEL HAYAT

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“If we can run a rendition, a kidnapping, a detention program, a torture program, keep it secret for years, and then when it is revealed, hold no one to account, what does this mean for the future direction of our society?”

— Edward Snowden.

A few days ago the Obama Administration finally released the Senate Committees finding on the CIA’s torture tactics. The report reads like a bad John Grisham novel, where countless atrocities are committed under the guise of protecting “freedom and democracy”. If anyone had any remaining doubts about the degenerate rottenness of American capitalism and imperialism, this report should exorcise them immediately.

In the name of the “war on terror,” GW Bush unleashed a get-rich-quick, anything-goes, free-for-all for contractors of military and other services. Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld’s private and public partners in crime and business made a literal killing off of no-bid, profit-drenched federal contracts, all in the name of “small government.” Even torture was outsourced. A recent New York Times article details the horrors committed by the CIA:

“The chief of interrogations, who is not named in the report, was given the job in fall 2002 even though the agency’s inspector general had urged that he be ‘orally admonished for inappropriate use of interrogation techniques’ in a training program in Latin America in the 1980s.

“And Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Jessen, identified by the pseudonyms Grayson Swigert and Hammond Dunbar in the report, had not conducted a single real interrogation. They had helped run a Cold War-era training program for the Air Force in which personnel were given a taste of the harsh treatment they might face if captured by Communist enemies. The program—called SERE, for Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape—had never been intended for use in American interrogations, and involved methods that had produced false confessions when used on American airmen held by the Chinese in the Korean War.

“The program allowed the psychologists to assess their own work—they gave it excellent grades—and to charge a daily rate of \$1,800 each, four times the pay of other interrogators, to water board detainees. Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Jessen later started a company that took over the C.I.A. program from 2005 until it was closed in 2009. The C.I.A. paid it \$81 million, plus \$1 million to protect the company from legal liability.

“Early in the program, the report says, ‘a junior officer on his first overseas assignment,’ who had no experience with prisons or interrogations, was placed in charge of a C.I.A. detention site in Afghanistan known as the Salt Pit. Other C.I.A. officers had previously proposed that he be stripped of access to classified information because of a ‘lack of honesty, judgment and maturity.’

“At the Salt Pit, the junior officer ordered a prisoner, Gul Rahman, shackled to the wall of his cell and stripped of most of his clothing. Mr. Rahman was found dead of hypothermia the next morning, lying on the bare concrete floor. Four months later, the junior officer was recommended for a cash award of \$2,500 for his ‘consistently superior work.’

“... The interrogation teams included people with ‘notable derogatory information’ in their records, including one with ‘workplace anger management issues’ and another who ‘had reportedly admitted to sexual assault.’”

This is just the tip of the iceberg. At secret off shore locations a litany of crimes against humanity were perpetrated. Nudity and humiliation, forced stress positions, being tackled violently or repeatedly slammed against a wall, prolonged ice water baths, cold concrete cells, dietary manipulation and deprivation, glaring lights and blaring music, tight hand and ankle cuffs leading to blisters and swollen legs, lack of medical care, placing pressure on detainees’ arteries, blowing cigarette or cigar smoke into detainees’ faces, solitary confinement, and enforced sleep deprivation were all common practices. (Id.)

Prisoners were forced to wear diapers and defecate on themselves, stripped naked and run through gauntlets of people beating and dragging them through the dirt. They were told their family members would be raped or have their throats cut, and were menaced with sexual abuse themselves. At least one was left naked in a freezing cell, only to die of hypothermia. (Id.)

However, the most shocking torture method revealed in this Senate Report is the rectal feeding procedures that the CIA used to keep detainees alive. Several prisoners were subjected to forced “rectal feedings,” in which “hummus, pasta with sauce, nuts, and raisins [were] ‘pureed’ and rectally infused.” To say that rectal feeding is like rape under international criminal law would be a euphemism. (Id).

It is important to keep in mind that these cruel procedures were carried out not by the Taliban, some Middle Eastern dictatorship or ISIS, but by the richest most powerful country in the world that claims to be the beacon of democracy and freedom on the global stage. Perhaps now more Americans will understand why many people around the world sees the United States as a hypocrite state that uses empty slogans of “freedom” and “democracy” to further its own imperialist agenda.

### **The Exploitation of “War on Terror”**

Over a million Iraqis and Afghans have been killed, with millions more displaced. These horrors were conceived on the basis of blatant lies and distortions. None of the 9/11 hijackers were from Afghanistan, yet that country was almost immediately invaded. There was absolutely no connection between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, and intelligence clearly showed he had no weapons of mass destruction, yet Iraq was bombed to oblivion and plunged into misery and mayhem. We can rest assured that most ordinary Iraqis and Afghans whose lives have been ruined by imperialism would prefer less US-style “freedom, civilization, and democracy,” and more food, housing, education, and healthcare and other basic necessities. The same can be said for ordinary Americans, who have had to foot the bill for these imperialist wars through austerity programs.

The only ones to really profit from these wars were the private contractors and the war industry. The Senate Report indicates that two psychologists were paid \$81 million by the CIA to advise on and help implement its brutal interrogation program. The two psychologists, who are only identified as pseudonyms – Grayson Swigert and Hammond Dunbar — traveled the world for the CIA, devising and carrying out interrogations using tactics that meet widely accepted definitions of torture. The two men were also entrusted with judging whether their methods were successful. Not surprisingly, they reported to their CIA bosses that their methods were crucial to persuading prisoners to divulge high-value information. However, this information is in direct contradiction to several testimonies by experts, including professional interrogators at the pentagon that have stated that torture is ineffective as a matter of principle and law. Even the Republican right-wing hawk John McCain has made it abundantly clear that the torture program achieved nothing— although big profits were indeed made. Other Republicans, such as Orrin Hatch, have called it “a pure political piece of crap.”

Common sense dictates that people will convince others of their position if it’s a matter of self-interest. This is fundamental problem with privatizing public services. Once profit is the underlying motive, the profiteers will go to any length to yield revenue.

### **Jail the Guilty**

If you listen to former Vice President Dick Cheney, he would have you believe that it was America's moral duty to torture these individuals. The reason why Mr. Cheney can go on national television and smugly confess to the fact that not only did he and former President George W. Bush know about the torture tactics but approved them is because the United States has had a history of committing torture. The United States did not just start torturing after 9/11. They've been doing it since the Spanish war including Vietnam. We have never been a nation of laws or the shining beacon on the hill. Our congress has always been tools to the corporations since its inception. They have just changed the labeling. What used to be called bribery is now called lobbying. The latest revelations of the CIA tortures and horrors are not contrary to American values, but to the contrary – is faithfulness to those values.

Mr. Cheney's statements and our past history with torture demonstrate why it is crucial that we prosecute the architects behind this latest torture tactics used by the CIA. If Mr. Cheney can go on national television and confess to being aware of and approving torture, so can the next vice president. It doesn't take much to find states and people, who present themselves as rational, but because they lack morality, commit crimes against humanity. For them reason is just a disguise, a way of rationalizing their crimes, and hiding them behind a veneer of civility and a thin posture of sanity. Sometimes monsters are not easy to recognize, especially when they dress the part of authority figures. When they pander to our prejudices, and stoke our fears with the intent to manipulate us. Look closely, and listen to their words. Are they offering justice, or are they only offering revenge?

That is why it is crucial that these detainees, who were illegally tortured, file a complaint with the international criminal court against the previous administration and all the people who were involved in administrating these barbaric practices. Official reports are far more important and hold credibility in court then press accounts. Legally this report constitutes an admission against interest. It can therefore be used for both criminal and civil proceedings. The Senate report figures show 119 individuals that were disappeared by the United States Government and tortured illegally. The previous administration should be held accountable for the pain and suffering of each and every one of those individuals.

Unlike in the past, where politicians and government agencies have been suspected of committing atrocious crimes, this time around we have identifiable persons who we know are responsible for committing these acts of torture. That is why it is so important that every American with a conscience demand that the Obama Administration put George W. Bush and all senior members of his Administration on trial for crimes against humanity. If we let these crimes go unpunished, then it means we have submitted to being comfortable with the idea of being an outlaw nation, not governed by law and morality, but instead by delusion, and ignorance. If we allow this to happen, if we get comfortable with the idea of torture as citizens of this nation, then each one of us in essence is complicit in torturing these individuals and must carry the weight of those crimes on our moral conciseness.