

Senate CIA Torture Report Details 'Ruthless' Brutality of Bush Era

 commondreams.org/news/2014/12/09/senate-cia-torture-report-details-ruthless-brutality-bush-era%20

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The executive summary of the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on CIA torture was released on Tuesday morning. As the [document itself](#) (pdf) was posted online, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Chairperson of the committee, took to the Senate floor and to lay out the case made within the 500+ page report. Watch video of Feinstein's remarks [here](#).

What the report shows, according to its introduction, is that the abuse performed by the CIA and documented by the investigation was found to be in direct "violation of U.S. law, treaty obligations, and our values."

According to Feinstein, the four key findings of the report include:

1. The CIA's "enhanced interrogation techniques" were not effective.
2. The CIA provided extensive inaccurate information about the operation of the program and its effectiveness to policymakers and the public.
3. The CIA's management of the program was inadequate and deeply flawed.
4. The CIA program was far more brutal than the CIA represented to policymakers and the American public.

Common Dreams posted updates following the release of the report, focusing on reactions and critical analysis from informed voices

On Twitter:

[Tweets from https://twitter.com/commondreams/lists/torture-report](https://twitter.com/commondreams/lists/torture-report)

3:38 PM: Maher Arar, a Canadian victim of rendition and torture by the U.S. government, responded to the Senate report on his Twitter account with several salient points:

In reading the [#TortureReport](#) let's not forget the judicial branch has been complicit by dismissing torture cases.

— Maher Arar (@ArarMaher) [December 9, 2014](#)

Well said RT [@dhh](#): Judging your crimes against humanity on a scale of "did it work" is a calculus reserved for those without a soul.

— Maher Arar (@ArarMaher) [December 9, 2014](#)

Americans like him make me have hope RT [@joerror](#): [@ArarMaher](#) I'm sorry that u were tortured by my country. It's a shame that cannot B undone

3:11 PM: Amnesty International: Release of Torture Report "[Must Not Be End of Story](#)"

Erika Guevara Rosas, Americas Director for Amnesty International, said in a statement:

"This report provides yet more damning detail of some of the human rights violations that were authorized by the highest authorities in the USA after 9/11. Despite much evidence having been in the public realm for years, no one has been brought to justice for authorizing or carrying out the acts in these CIA programmes.

"The declassified information contained in the summary, while limited, is a reminder to the world of the utter failure of the USA to end the impunity enjoyed by those who authorized and used torture and other ill-treatment. This is a wake-up call to the USA, they must disclose the full truth about the human rights violations, hold perpetrators accountable and ensure justice for the victims. This is not a policy nicety, it is a requirement under international law."

3:03 PM: Statement by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon): '[Report Shows CIA Torture Did Not Work and America Should Never Torture Again](#)'

Senator Wyden said:

"While I understand this is a dangerous world and am grateful to the rank-and-file intelligence professionals that keep our country safe, the facts show that torture did nothing to protect America from foreign threats.

"The current CIA leadership has been alarmingly resistant to acknowledging the full scope of the mistakes and misrepresentations that surrounded this program for so many years. I hope this report is the catalyst CIA leaders need to acknowledge that torture did not work and close this disgraceful chapter in our country's history."

2:59 PM: The Guardian: '[Rectal rehydration and waterboarding: how the CIA tortured its detainees](#)'

Reporter Oliver Laughland documents some of the most brutal torture tactics contained the report. Read his reporting [here](#).

2:54 PM: ProPublica: '[The Tortured History of the Senate's Torture Report](#)'

The Senate began investigating the CIA's detainee program nearly six years ago. It completed a draft of its report two years ago. Today, the Senate Intelligence Committee has finally released the report's blistering executive summary. (The full report remains classified.) What took so long? It's a

tale of White House indecisiveness, Republican opposition, and CIA snooping. Check out the timeline [here](#).

2:47 PM: As journalists and analysts pour over contents of report, examples of some of the shocking details of CIA torture were being shared via Twitter:

CIA orders suspect be shackled to wall so had to rest on bare floor. Only wearing sweatshirt. Body found next day. Died of hypothermia.

— Ewen MacAskill (@ewenmacaskill) [December 9, 2014](#)

Handcuffed CIA prisoner hanging from bar 22 hours a day for two days. "was wearing a diaper and had no access to toilet facilities".

— Ewen MacAskill (@ewenmacaskill) [December 9, 2014](#)

Rectal feeding of detainee led to "prolapse" - in plain English that's your intestines coming out of your anus. pic.twitter.com/kOzLMntlGa

— Michael Bolen (@MichaelBolen) [December 9, 2014](#)

CIA torture report: agent threatened to cut throat of detainee's mother – live <http://t.co/ZyjQeVcNQD>
pic.twitter.com/SCcaO39bPS

— dominic rushe (@dominicru) [December 9, 2014](#)

2:38 PM: Ben Emmerson, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights: Those who sanctioned torture "[must face criminal penalties commensurate with the gravity of their crimes](#)"

UN-appointed expert and investigator Ben Emmerson issued a statement today, which reads, in part:

"The individuals responsible for the criminal conspiracy revealed in today's report must be brought to justice, and must face criminal penalties commensurate with the gravity of their crimes. The fact that the policies revealed in this report were authorised at a high level within the US Government provides no excuse whatsoever. Indeed, it reinforces the need for criminal accountability."

2:25 PM: Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch: [Torture 'Can Never Be Justified'](#)

Roth said:

"The Senate report summary should forever put to rest CIA denials that it engaged in torture, which is criminal and can never be justified. The report shows the repeated claims that harsh measures were

needed to protect Americans are utter fiction.”

2:19 PM: Trevor Timm at The Guardian: "Stop believing the lies: America tortured more than 'some folks' – and covered it up"

The executive director of the Freedom of the Press Foundation [writes](#):

The torture defenders from the CIA and the Bush administration probably won't even make a serious attempt to say they didn't torture anyone – just that it was effective, that there were “serious mistakes”, but that “countless lives have been saved and our Homeland is more secure” – with a capital H.

This highlights the mistake of the Senate committee, in a way. Instead of focusing on the illegal nature of the torture, Senator Dianne Feinstein's investigators worked to document torture's ineffectiveness. The debate, now, is whether torture worked. It clearly didn't. But the debate should be: Why the hell aren't these torturous liars [in jail](#)?

2:11 PM: Glenn Greenwald: [The Establishment Media's role in torture](#)

The U.S. media [...] played a central role in first obscuring, then justifying, the Bush torture regime to the public. One of the most extreme examples was this Joe Klein column in The Guardian viciously mocking those who claimed the U.S. was torturing detainees (“total rubbish, of course”), and he even wrote this about detainees:

They wear orange jump suits, which are probably an improvement over their Afghan cave-wear (I would actually prefer they be dressed in pink tutus, to give them an appreciation of the freedoms accorded western ballerinas).

Liberal journalist Jonathan Alter wrote a Newsweek column expressly demanding that the U.S. Government use torture, headlined “Time to Think About Torture.” It began: “In this autumn of anger, even a liberal can find his thoughts turning to ... torture.”

Now we have new examples. Today's Senate Committee report describes how Douglas Jehl, then a New York Times reporter, now The Washington Post's Foreign Editor, promised the CIA positive coverage of its torture program (a common practice among some DC national security reporters).

2:03 PM: Moyers & Company editors have highlighted the [twenty key findings](#) of the report on their website:

“Moyers & Company is preparing a detailed analysis of the report for later publication. A quick overview of what the report contains can be found in the Senate Intelligence Committee's 20 findings, reprinted [here](#).”

1:28 PM: Sen. Dianne Feinstein's [official statement \(pdf\)](#) highlights four key findings of CIA torture report

The study's 20 findings and conclusions, according to Feinstein's statement, can be grouped into four central themes, each of which is supported extensively in the Executive Summary:

1. The CIA's "enhanced interrogation techniques" were not effective.
2. The CIA provided extensive inaccurate information about the operation of the program and its effectiveness to policymakers and the public.
3. The CIA's management of the program was inadequate and deeply flawed.
4. The CIA program was far more brutal than the CIA represented to policymakers and the American public.

1:13 PM: Sen. Bernie Sanders: [Report Details "Ugly Chapter in American History"](#)

Independent Senator from Vermont Bernie Sanders said:

"A great nation must be prepared to acknowledge its errors. This report details an ugly chapter in American history during which our leaders and the intelligence community dishonored our nation's proud traditions. Of course we must aggressively pursue international terrorists who would do us harm, but we must do so in a way that is consistent with the basic respect for human rights which makes us proud to be Americans.

"The United States must not engage in torture. If we do, in an increasingly brutal world we lose our moral standing to condemn other nations or groups that engage in uncivilized behavior."

1:08 PM: Glenn Greenwald: [Destruction of "Zero Dark Thirty" Scenario](#)

The report utterly decimated the [central claim](#) of "Zero Dark Thirty" that torture played a key role in finding Osama bin Laden (h/t: [Farhad Manjoo](#))

12:59 PM: Sen. Mark Udall (D-Colorado) [statement](#) suggests he will not push for further, un-redacted disclosures

The statement released by Sen. Mark Udall following the Intelligence Committee's report suggests he is satisfied with the report and will likely not follow through with threats, which followed [urging from anti-torture and transparency activists](#), that he would read the full un-redacted report into the congressional record. In his official statement, Udall said:

"The release of the executive summary of the Senate Intelligence Committee's study of the CIA's

detention and interrogation program is an historic victory for our nation, the Constitution, and our system of checks and balances. This study ensures that the truth about the CIA's brutal torture program finally comes out and that the agency can learn from its repeated missteps and start to restore its integrity. My goal from day one has been holding the CIA accountable, shedding light on this dark chapter of our history, and ensuring neither the CIA nor any future administration would make these grievous mistakes ever again. The report released today achieves those goals and affirms that we are a nation that does not hide from its past, but learns from it.

"We can protect our national security without compromising who we are as Americans. This landmark study — and the millions of pages of agency documents and testimony it is based upon — shows that torture is not effective and does not make us safer."

12:54 PM: Legal Director of Center for Constitutional Rights: "Criminal Prosecutions Must Follow Senate CIA Torture Report Findings"

CCR attorney Baher Azmy issued [this statement](#):

The long-delayed Senate report proves what we have been saying since 2006: that the CIA engaged in a sophisticated program of state-sanctioned torture, notable for its elaborate planning and [ruthless application](#). We have witnessed firsthand the devastating human consequences in meetings with our clients at Guantanamo. The report also exposes the CIA's lies about how the program operated and the utility of the information obtained: False claims about the usefulness of that information were used to justify and cover up monstrous crimes. We renew our demand for accountability for those individuals responsible for the CIA torture program. They should be prosecuted in U.S. courts; and if our government continues to refuse to hold them accountable, they must be [pursued internationally](#) under the principles of universal jurisdiction.

12:49 PM: The Intercept's Dan Froomkin says Report's Footnotes "Will Make You Weep"

It's the footnotes that will make you weep and wail. Some of the CIA detainees who never should have been there: pic.twitter.com/N2qTga3UiS

— Dan Froomkin (@froomkin) [December 9, 2014](#)

12:45 PM: Former CIA analyst and Common Dreams contributor Ray McGovern responds:

"It is bizarre; the Executive and Congress both live in fear of the thugs of the CIA, who have now been joined by Secretary of State John Kerry (probably after checking with the White House) issuing spurious warnings regarding the dangers of releasing the report -- as if the 'bad guys' have not yet heard of CIA torture! No one -- Democrat or Republican -- wants the truth to get out about torture techniques authorized by the Bush/Cheney administration, techniques actually demonstrated multiple times in the White House itself to the administration's most senior national security and justice officials, and then implemented by CIA thugs.

"Far too many 'notables' approved the torture or, at least, had guilty knowledge -- House minority leader Nancy Pelosi, for example. Likely, an eviscerated ('redacted' is the euphemism) Senate report on CIA torture is all we will

be permitted to read. At that point, the ball will be squarely in lame-duck Sen. Mark Udall's court. Will he feel bound by the Omerta-style oath of silence typical of Establishment Washington, or will he have the courage to get the truth out, using his Constitutionally protected right to do so without legal jeopardy?"

12:27 PM: [The Guardian reports: CIA's brutal and ineffective use of torture revealed in landmark report](#)

Spencer Ackerman reports:

After examining 20 case studies, the report found that torture “regularly resulted in fabricated information,” said committee chairwoman Dianne Feinstein, in a statement summarizing the findings.

“During the brutal interrogations the CIA was often unaware the information was fabricated.”

The torture that the CIA carried out was even more extreme than what it portrayed to congressional overseers and the George W Bush administration, the committee found. It went beyond techniques already made public through a decade of leaks and lawsuits, which had revealed that agency interrogators subjected detainees to quasi-drowning, staged mock executions, and revved power drills near their heads.

At least 39 detainees, the committee found, experienced techniques like “cold water dousing” – different from the quasi-drowning known as waterboarding – which the Justice Department never approved. The committee found at least five cases of “rectal rehydration”, and cases of death threats made to detainees. CIA interrogators, the committee charged, told detainees they would hurt their children and “sexually assault” or kill their wives.

12:14 PM: [ACLU responds: Senate Torture Report Shows Need for Accountability](#)

Responding to the report, the American Civil Liberties Union released a [detailed plan for full accountability](#), and ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero had this reaction:

This is a shocking report, and it is impossible to read it without feeling immense outrage that our government engaged in these terrible crimes. This report definitively drags into the light the horrific details of illegal torture, details that both the Bush and Obama administrations have worked hard to sweep under the rug. The government officials who authorized illegal activity need to be held accountable. The administration’s current position – doing absolutely nothing – is tantamount to issuing tacit pardons. Tacit pardons are worse than formal ones because they undermine the rule of law. The CIA’s wrongful acts violated basic human rights, served as a huge recruiting tool for our enemies, and alienated allies world-wide. Our response to the damning evidence in this report will define us as a nation.

This should be the beginning of a process, not the end. The report should shock President Obama and Congress into action, to make sure that torture and cruelty are never used again. The Department of Justice needs to appoint a special prosecutor to hold the architects and perpetrators of the torture program accountable for its design, implementation, and cover-ups. Congress must assert its constitutional role in the system of checks and balances, and oversee the CIA, which in this report sounds more like a rogue paramilitary group than the intelligence gathering agency that it’s supposed to be. The president needs to use the moral authority of his office to formally recognize both the torture program’s victims and those in government who resisted this shameful and illegal policy.

11:47 AM: Senate Intelligence Committee Releases unclassified, redacted version of executive summary

The official unclassified version of the executive summary of the report is [here](#) (pdf).

9:17 AM: America can't handle the truth – about Guantánamo, torture or a man now free from both

In an [op-ed](#) in the Guardian, Cori Crider, a lawyer with the UK-based human rights legal group Reprieve, describes why her client Abu Wa'el Dhiab, released from Guantanamo just days ago after more than 12 years without trial, is a prime example of how deep the U.S. government's "indifference to human suffering" and obsession with keeping evidence of its abuses out of the public domain has run since 2001.

...if you think you're going to get the truth about torture out of the so-called War on Terror's wall of silence when the long-anticipated [CIA torture report](#) finally gets released on Tuesday, consider that we can't even see that photo of my shackled client getting on a plane – that I am not even allowed to tell you about 10 hours of video of him getting force-fed by military service members.

Perhaps the American government can't handle the truth about itself, from torture in secret CIA prisons to my client's torture at the world's most notorious prison, even after he is finally free. But I believe the American people can.

9:00 AM: Two must-read backgrounders on CIA torture program

On Monday, independent journalist Marcy Wheeler, aka [@Emptywheel](#), released [this 13-part timeline](#) via Twitter which explains the rise of the torture program under the Bush administration.

Also on Monday, Marcelene Hearn, a staff attorney with the ACLU's national security project published this piece, titled "[Required Reading: Prequels to the Torture Report](#)" on the *Blog of Rights*.

7:59 AM: Ahead of Senate panel's report, torture opponents challenge coordinated misinformation campaign

Ahead of the report's release, opponents of the brutal practices authorized by the Bush administration are preparing to pour over the report to see just how far the six-year long probe goes in identifying the real perpetrators of the programs which saw individuals in the custody of the U.S. government beaten and mistreated in ways that other investigators of the program have identified as "war crimes" and members of the committee have said will make Americans "disgusted."

In recent days, as [previously reported](#), current and former CIA officials, lawmakers, and members of the Bush administration have come out in defense of the CIA's brutal tactics while also attempting to discredit the Senate report.

In an [interview](#) with the German newspaper *Deutsche Welle* published Tuesday morning, (Ret.) Col. Morris Davis, who once led the government's prosecution team at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, said the Senate report may not reveal things not already documented elsewhere, but that's its publication is vital nonetheless. "I don't anticipate that the report will reveal some additional practices that have not been discussed in some way already," Morris said in the interview. "What it will do though is officially confirm what's been talked about in the media for years. Having that official record is important."

Staking out [his position on the report](#) prior to its release, journalist Glenn Greenwald, who has covered the CIA torture program that took place under former President George W. Bush extensively, said that the American people should not succumb to the "worst myths official Washington and its establishment media have told" the public over the course of recent years. The program was not isolated to just a few cases, as is often suggested, writes Greenwald, but rather "was an officially sanctioned, worldwide regime of torture that had the acquiescence, if not explicit approval, of the top members of both political parties in Congress."
