



Written by [James Heiser](#) on August 27, 2009

CIA's "Interrogation" Instructions Unveiled

A Washington Post article details some of the appalling tactics employed by the CIA as operatives (some lacking any interrogation training) attempted to beat the truth out of detainees. As detailed previously for [TheNewAmerican.com](#), the CIA's policy of so-called Extraordinary Interrogation Techniques left corpses in its wake, and allegedly involved the routine violation of the U.S. felony torture statute, which defines torture as including "the threat of imminent death; or the threat that another person will imminently be subjected to death, severe physical pain or suffering."



The *Washington Post* offers a summary of an average "interrogation":

As the session begins, the detainee stands naked, except for a hood covering his head. Guards shackle his arms and legs, then slip a small collar around his neck. The collar will be used later; according to CIA guidelines for interrogations, it will serve as a handle for slamming the detainee's head against a wall.

After removing the hood, the interrogator opens with a slap across the face — to get the detainee's attention — followed by other slaps, the guidelines state. Next comes the head-slaming, or "walling," which can be tried once "to make a point," or repeated again and again.

"Twenty or thirty times consecutively" is permissible, the guidelines say, "if the interrogator requires a more significant response to a question." And if that fails, there are far harsher techniques to be tried.

As "interrogation techniques" go, such a description arguably better befits the stereotypical history of a prison in some "banana republic," than any effort undertaken by an arm of the American government. How does pounding a person's head into the wall lead to coherent, let alone relevant, answers — especially when the process is alleged entrusted to someone who doesn't even know how an interrogation is supposed to be conducted in the first place?

Neoconservatives are, of course, trying to have it both way, simultaneously defending the "necessity" of the brutal tactics (and usually challenging both the patriotism and the manhood of anyone who disagrees with them), while also insisting that since it was CIA operatives who "blew the whistle" of the whole scandal, that there was no need for any further investigation.

Daniel Henninger's shrill rant for the *Wall Street Journal* (["The War on Terror is Over"](#)) is typical of the neocon histrionics one comes to expect with each revelation in the CIA's history of "interrogations." Hyperventilating over Attorney General Eric Holder's decision to appoint prosecutor John Durham to investigate whether or not U.S. laws were violated during CIA interrogations, Henninger opines: "Now the lawyers are about to smother the war on terror.... This means that the class of person who blows up skyscrapers, American embassies or the *USS Cole* would spend less time under a bare light bulb than a



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domestic robbery suspect. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in May that the goal of a proposed administration 'global justice initiative' would be to get all terror suspects into a U.S. or foreign court." Good heavens! How could the Republic endure those who are *accused* of crimes being brought into a court to be *tried* for their crimes?

But then, Mr. Henninger began his rant with an appeal to Shakespeare's line from *Henry VI*, part 2, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers." Apparently Mr. Henninger has forgotten that the character who prescribes such a course of action is a murderous villain bent on undermining the whole order of society.

The disclosures regarding CIA tactics make it clear that far more than "time under a bare light bulb" was what was going on for years. The dozen or more people who allegedly died because of such "interrogation tactics" did not die from harsh language.

People with the mindset of a Daniel Henninger appear incapable of imagining a criminal investigation which does not involve torture; in Henninger's assessment of the investigation: "In toto, it's a death sentence for an effective war on terror. It makes what's left of the war — telephone wiretaps or monitoring money transfers — vulnerable to a steady stream of congressional and legal objection. That lets the Obama administration evade political responsibility by letting others wind down the war on terror. The message of Scotland's release and the Holder decision is that the will born in the wake of 9/11 is waning. The war on terror is being downgraded to not much more than tough talk. Al Qaeda, the Taliban and the Iranians, not yet converts to the West's caricature of its own legal traditions, will take note. In time, they will be back. The second war on terror is in the future."

Apparently the "wimps" who want to call an end to the violent fantasies of the neocons are to be found within the CIA. As [the Washington Post observes](#), concerns regarding the harsh "interrogation tactics" arose from within the agency:

Such techniques raised concerns among some agency officials, particularly members of a medical advisory group known as the Office of Medical Services (OMS). When the interrogation program began, the group 'was neither consulted nor involved in the initial analysis of the risk and benefits' of enhanced interrogation techniques, according to [a 2004 report by the CIA's inspector general](#).

According to the report, the OMS did not issue formal medical guidelines until April 2003, after the waterboarding of Khalid Sheik Mohammed, the self-proclaimed mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Over time, however, as the interrogation program was refined and strict guidelines were imposed on the use of certain techniques, the OMS began to play an increasingly pivotal role.

A 2005 Justice Department memo repeatedly referred to December 2004 OMS guidelines in assessing the application of coercive techniques, noting that the "OMS has, in fact, prohibited the use of certain techniques in the interrogation of certain detainees."

Perhaps those who have chosen to close their eyes to the facts, or to the necessity for the sake of the Republic of maintaining the rule of law particularly in the midst of a crisis, will continue to make excuses for a record of abuses that becomes more alarming with every revelation.

Certainly, it could be argued that it would have been better if anyone other than the Obama administration, with its demonstrated capacity for hyper-politicizing everything it touches, had been in



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place to carry out the investigation. Nevertheless, facts are stubborn things.

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