



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on June 1, 2009

Abuse Photo Controversy Reveals Obama Lies

White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs [ridiculed](#) the conservative British newspaper's story and told the White House press corps on May 27 that "none of the photographs in question depict the images described in the article. Again, I think if you do an even moderate Google search, you're not going to find many of these newspapers and truth within, say, 25 words of each other." The next day (May 28), *The New American* [reported](#):



It is possible that there are two entirely different sets of abusive photographs, based upon Gibbs' non-denial denial.... It reeks of public affairs-coached talking points. Why not simply say that it didn't happen, if indeed it didn't happen? Why is it that such finely parsed denials seem like they are in search of an "out" by claiming later (should photos verifying the British newspaper's account eventually be published) that the feds were talking about a different set of photos than what the *London Daily Telegraph* was writing about?

It now appears this was precisely the case, as the very next day (May 29) the Internet magazine *Salon* [reported](#) that U.S. Army Major-General Antonio Taguba said the British newspaper's account of his quote was accurate: "These pictures show torture, abuse, rape and every indecency." Since Taguba had been the two-star general in command of the 2004 Abu Ghraib investigation, he was in a position to see all the suppressed photos. Moreover, Taguba [told Salon](#) he wasn't sure if the photos he had described were among the set that the Obama administration had been seeking to prevent from public disclosure.

The White House's ongoing cover-up of the media reports on rape photos (the [photos apparently show](#) direct rape by U.S. soldiers as well as rape by soldiers using various objects) speaks volumes about the Obama administration and how it operates. Obama is using the old Clinton administration way of parsing phrases rather than the Bush administration's way of outright lying to the American people (though Clinton, too, [engaged in outright lies](#) when he was pushed, such as "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky"). Both President Bushes lied to the American people directly when it suited them, from the father George ["read my lips"](#) Bush, to the son George W. Bush. The younger Bush lied when he told the American people he didn't violate the [Fourth Amendment](#) and [wiretap phones without a warrant](#) and that ["This government does not torture people."](#)



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General Taguba's report revealed that the overwhelming majority of detainees at Abu Ghraib had no connection to terrorism. Suspected terrorists were being funneled to Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan or Guantanamo. "These were people who were taken off the streets and put in jail — teenagers and old men and women," he [told the New Yorker](#) shortly after retiring in 2007. "I kept on asking these questions of the officers I interviewed: 'You knew what was going on. Why didn't you do something to stop it?'"

The answer to that question was that the low-ranking soldiers were taking orders from Washington to engage in torture. "These M.P. troops were not that creative," Taguba said. "Somebody was giving them guidance, but I was legally prevented from further investigation into higher authority. I was limited to a box." Taguba [says](#) that the U.S. Commander in Iraq General "Sanchez knew exactly what was going on," but because Taguba was limited to investigating enlisted men and junior officers, he wasn't allowed to conduct a thorough investigation.

Former Vice President Dick Cheney has a different explanation for what happened at Abu Ghraib: all the blame should be left at the feet of American soldiers. In essence, the vice president who had taken [five deferments to the draft during Vietnam](#) in order to avoid military service wants to blame the troops: "At Abu Ghraib, a few sadistic prison guards abused inmates in violation of American law, military regulations, and simple decency," Cheney [told the American Enterprise Institute last month](#). "For the harm they did, to Iraqi prisoners and to America's cause, they deserved and received Army justice. And it takes a deeply unfair cast of mind to equate the disgraces of Abu Ghraib with the lawful, skillful, and entirely honorable work of CIA personnel trained to deal with a few malevolent men."

Americans have a choice of believing either a two-star general and the soldiers in the field who say they were directed to torture by higher ups, or Dick Cheney and the politicians in Washington.

Of the politicians in Washington, Taguba [says](#) they were well-informed of the torture taking place at Abu Ghraib: "[Former Secretary of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld is very perceptive and has a mind like a steel trap. There's no way he's suffering from C.R.S. — Can't Remember S***. He's trying to acquit himself, and a lot of people are lying to protect themselves." Ditto for Cheney, apparently.

But Cheney's remarks about only "a few" soldiers engaging in torture at Abu Ghraib are patently false. The U.S. government engaged in torture across the globe during the Bush Administration, from the "dark prison" at [Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan](#) to [Guantanamo](#) to our outsourcing of torture to nations in the CIA's ["extraordinary rendition" program](#). Our soldiers didn't suddenly all get "sadistic" all over the globe for the first time in American history without direction from some central authority.

Barack Obama is now engaged in covering up crimes of the past in order to ensure that he has the same unchecked power to conduct violations of the U.S. Constitution. And he's not without allies in the media. "Barack Obama, whose first act as president was to re-criminalize torture, initially favored making the pictures public. Then Mr. Obama changed his mind. His critics (civil libertarians, human rights advocates and press commentators) are saying that this makes him no different from his predecessor," Philip Gourevitch [wrote](#) in the May 24 *New York Times*. "They are mistaken. Just as it was a public service to release the Abu Ghraib photographs five years ago, Mr. Obama is right today to say we don't need more of them.... Who are we trying to fool, if not ourselves, if we pretend that we need more photos to know what has been going on?"

But many Americans remain unconvinced that our government tortured, or are bizarrely convinced that we were justified in doing it. The release of more pictures may convince others of the truth that we've



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tortured as a nation, and the release of the names of those tortured, many of whom were children or ended up being found innocent, will give a much-needed shock to the national conscience.

The strategy Obama is employing is not directly lying to the American people. The new Obama regime lies to the American people by parsing phrases, and answering questions no one is asking. Truth can sometimes be found in parsing the coached talking points emanating from White House spokesmen, and that's how *The New American* was able to divine the truth in this case.

That much said, Obama's Clinton-esque wordsmanship is not always a reliable method of detecting the truth. Obama may be the first [Rorschach](#) president. Like the famous psychological ink blot test that is designed to elicit from subjects what they want to see, President Obama will often take both sides of a controversial issue in order to get the American people to agree with him. You are supposed to hear from him what you want to hear.

For example, Obama promised to remove all troops from Iraq by 2011, and to keep up to 50,000 U.S. soldiers in Iraq after 2012 — [in the same speech](#). He also [pledged](#) to eliminate the unconstitutional Bush-era military commissions, only to create his own ad-hoc, unconstitutional military commissions in the same speech. Whatever side of those issues you're on, he's on your side. And he's on the other side too.

But you can't get angry with him. After all, he used flowery language. He's sooo well-spoken. And he's a good-looking guy with a nice family. He exudes warm fuzzies. Perhaps, but Obama doesn't exude truth.

What does this mean for the American people? It means that once again, we have elected a dishonest President. And absent magical chicken bones or some other truth detection method, truth will be in short supply over the next three and a half years.

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