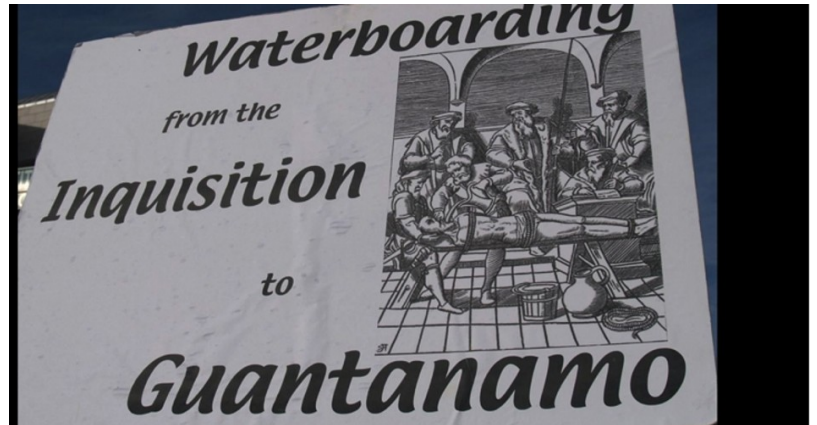




Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 11, 2014

Controversy Continues Regarding Senate Committee Report on CIA Torture

The fallout from the Senate Intelligence Committee's December 9 release of the summary of its report on the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program continues, as the report's critics and defenders go toe-to-toe. Many Republicans have been critical of the report because it casts a program initiated during the administration of George W. Bush in a negative light and it was compiled by a committee chaired by Democrat — Dianne Feinstein. However, even a prominent Republican has praised the report and condemned CIA torture.



Senators Jim Risch (R-Idaho) and Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) issued a joint statement in advance of the report's release that harshly criticized the committee's action:

This report does not qualify as either serious or constructive. This was a partisan effort that divided members of the committee, and the committee against the people of the CIA. We voted against this report because it is flawed, and voted against declassifying this report because we believed that its release could put American lives at risk, be used to contribute to propaganda against the United States by our enemies, and damage U.S. foreign policy and counterterrorism efforts.

The Risch-Rubio statement continued:

As a nation at war, we need a coherent detention and interrogation policy in order to extract valuable intelligence about terrorist networks from captured operatives. The Obama Administration has no detention policy, and it has hindered U.S. efforts to fight terrorism globally.

The senators apparently believe that being engaged in warfare (though Congress has not passed a declaration of war since June 5, 1942) is sufficient justification for a civilian government agency (which the CIA is) to ignore several statements found in the Bill of Rights, such as the Fifth Amendment's prohibition against holding a person accountable for a crime without an indictment from a grand jury, the Sixth Amendment's guarantee of a speedy and public trial in the state or district where the crime was committed, or the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.

Aware of these violations, the CIA established "black sites" outside of U.S. jurisdiction where it could conduct its "enhanced interrogation" operations in secret.

As the media has had a couple of days to digest the report's findings, commentary about them, as well as interviews with key players in the Bush administration, has fueled controversy on both sides of the issue.

Not all Republicans agreed with Risch and Rubio, however. Among those taking an opposite position was the 2008 Republican presidential nominee, Senator John McCain, who delivered a statement on the Senate floor about the committee's intelligence report that stated, in part:



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I rise in support of the release — the long-delayed release — of the Senate Intelligence Committee’s summarized, unclassified review of the so-called “enhanced interrogation techniques” that were employed by the previous administration to extract information from captured terrorists. It is a thorough and thoughtful study of practices that I believe not only failed their purpose — to secure actionable intelligence to prevent further attacks on the U.S. and our allies — but actually damaged our security interests, as well as our reputation as a force for good in the world.

McCain’s experience at being tortured by the North Vietnamese while he was a prisoner of war may have had an impact on his lack of sympathy for “enhanced interrogation.” He continued:

I know from personal experience that the abuse of prisoners will produce more bad than good intelligence. I know that victims of torture will offer intentionally misleading information if they think their captors will believe it.... I know the use of torture compromises that which most distinguishes us from our enemies, our belief that all people, even captured enemies, possess basic human rights, which are protected by international conventions the U.S. not only joined, but for the most part authored.

When former Bush Vice President Dick Cheney was interviewed on Fox News’ *Special Report With Bret Baier*, the host played a video of some of McCain’s comments on the Senate floor and asked Cheney for his reaction, Cheney replied:

My reaction to that is that John and I have a fundamental disagreement about the program. I think that what needed to be done was done, I think we were perfectly justified in doing it, and I would do it again in a minute.

That there are “fundamental differences” between Cheney and McCain on whether the use of “enhanced interrogation” — a euphemism for practices such as “waterboarding” that most people now recognize as torture — says a lot, considering how much the two men have much in common. Both are members of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which has long promoted a U.S. foreign policy of military interventionism. And both are members of the neoconservative wing of the Republican Party.

Considering their differences on the CIA torture program, however, a major difference between the two CFR neo-cons is that McCain appears to have a sense of what is humane or inhumane, while Cheney displays little evidence of appreciating such a distinction. An December 9 ABC News report compiled a list from the committee report that highlighted some of the atrocities that CIA interrogators performed under a program Cheney believes “we were perfectly justified in doing. All quotes are from the report:

- Sexual Assault: “Numerous CIA interrogators and other CIA personnel associated with the program ... engaged in inappropriate detainee interrogations, had workplace anger management issues, and had reportedly admitted to sexual assault.”
- Round-the-Clock EIT (Enhanced Interrogation Tehniques): Detainee Abu Zubaydah was placed “in complete isolation for 47 days,” then subjected to “enhanced interrogation techniques on a near 24-hour-per-day basis.” He “cried, begged, pleaded, and whimpered,” but denied having any information.

CIA interrogators reportedly told Zubaydah “that the only way he would leave the facility was in the coffin-shaped confinement box” where he had spent 266 hours.

- Waterboarding. Even after the interrogation team told CIA headquarters that it was “highly unlikely” he had useful information, interrogators continued to waterboard Abu Zubaydah, who



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“coughed, vomited, and had involuntary spasms of the torso and extremities” during the ordeal. At one point he “became completely unresponsive, with bubbles rising through his open, full mouth.”

- Rectal infusion of “Pureed” humus, pasta, nuts, and raisins. Several detainees, including Zubaydah, Marwan al-Jabbur, and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, underwent “rectal rehydration” or “rectal fluid resuscitation” and one detainee, Majid Klian, was rectally infused with a “lunch tray” made up of hummus, pasta with saude, raisins, and nuts, that had been “pureed.” One CIA officer noted, “We were impressed with the ancillary effectiveness of rectal infusion.”

With a history of engagement against such inhumane activities, there is little wonder that in July, former Representative Ron Paul wrote a column entitled “End Torture, Shut Down the CIA!” Paul published his column in anticipation of the findings of the 6,500-page Senate Intelligence Committee study. He concluded:

Revelations of US secret torture sites overseas and a new Senate investigation revealing widespread horrific CIA torture practices should finally lead to the abolishment of this agency. Far from keeping us safer, CIA covert actions across the globe have led to destruction of countries and societies and unprecedented resentment toward the United States. For our own safety, end the CIA!

Photo of “waterboarding” sign: Jim Kuhn

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