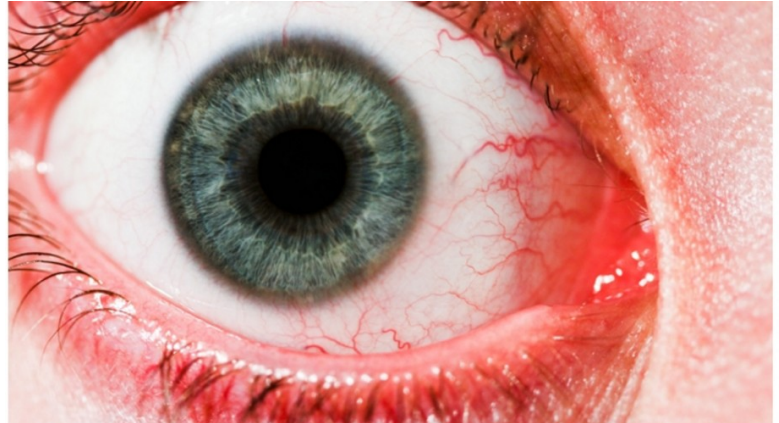




Written by [Steve Byas](#) on February 10, 2016

Trump Vows To Go Beyond Waterboarding

Largely lost in all the attention given to a vulgar comment Donald Trump publicly made against fellow Republican candidate Senator Ted Cruz in regard to Cruz's statement that he would not bring back waterboarding was Trump's insistence that he would not only bring it back, "I'd bring back a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding."



Trump's support for the practice of waterboarding was not a new revelation at the most recent Republican debate. Appearing on *This Week With George Stephanopolous* last fall, Trump said he "would absolutely bring back interrogation and strong interrogation," including waterboarding. "You know, they don't use waterboarding over there; they use chopping off people's heads. I would bring it back. I think waterboarding is peanuts compared to what they'd do to us."

In last Saturday night's ABC televised debate, the moderators cited Trump's previous statement of support for the controversial practice used during the Bush administration, then asked Trump's opponent, Senator Ted Cruz of Texas his opinion of it.

"I would not bring it back in any widespread use, and indeed I join with Senator [John] McCain in legislation prohibiting line officers from employing it," Cruz responded.

Trump hotly disagreed, and promised that he not only would "bring back waterboarding," he would "bring back a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding."

Exactly what "worse than waterboarding" would entail, Trump did not say, but it is important to consider what is involved in waterboarding.

Many regard waterboarding as a form of water torture in which water is poured over a cloth covering the face and the breathing passages of a restrained captive. It causes the individual being "waterboarded" to experience the sensation he is being drowned — and, in fact, that is what is happening. If not halted in time, the subject would die by drowning.

Former CIA officer Bob Baer contends that it often extracts worthless confessions: "I mean you can get anyone to confess to anything if the torture's bad enough."

Writing in the *National Interest*, Remy Mauduit recounted his personal experience at having been waterboarded. "Waterboarding is often described as a simulated drowning or a technique 'to convince the interrogated that he or she is drowning.' There is no way to simulate the lungs filling with fluid and the victim does not need to be convinced physiologically. They are in the process of drowning."



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Mauduit explained that waterboarding “is difficult to understand absent first-hand experience.” The tortured person, Mauduit continued, is reminded that this “near drowning will happen repeatedly and will eventually culminate with that promised slow and agonizing death. In spite of my frenzied fight to survive, I prayed so many times for death and the deliverance from pain.”

But is this practice effective in extracting needed information? Mauduit insists that it is not effective. “Waterboarding, like other torture methods, makes you talk. You talk a lot; say anything, absolutely anything to get the torture to stop. You throw up a lot, you talk, you scream like a demented person whenever you can, and you throw up again.”

Mauduit concludes that it is all for naught for the torturers: “You give all the answers your torturer wants, and more, but not much is true, precise, actionable intelligence.”

Malcolm Wrightson Nance, a former member of the U.S. military intelligence community was just as blunt: “Waterboarding has the ability to make the subject answer any question with the truth, a half-truth or outright lie in order to stop the procedure.... It is not a simulation of drowning — it is drowning.”

Nance told members of the House Judiciary Committee in 2007 about his time as an instructor at the U.S. Navy Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) school in California where he and other instructors taught students to resist “the techniques of brutal authoritarian enemies.”

Nance argued that waterboarding was “the most severe of those employed.”

In April 2005, Human Rights Watch wrote an open letter to Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez asking for the practice to be condemned as in violation of both U.S. and international law, “Under the laws of the land, U.S. personnel who order or take part in waterboarding are committing criminal acts — torture, assault, and war crimes — which are punishable as felony offenses.”

On the Monday following the debate, Trump castigated Cruz for his opposition to waterboarding at a campaign rally in New Hampshire. A woman in the crowd yelled a vulgar statement about Cruz, insinuating that Cruz’s opposition to waterboarding was because he was weak.

Instead of ignoring the woman’s obscene remark, Trump gleefully repeated the objectionable phrase, drawing a huge cheer from his crowd. Later, Trump defended his use of the word to Fox News, telling them that he had received a “standing ovation,” from the audience, who “loved it” when he repeated the word.

In fact, Trump’s son, Eric, dismissed any concern over waterboarding itself. “Well, listen you see these terrorists that are flying planes into buildings, right? You see our cities getting shot up in California. You see Paris getting shot up. And then somebody complains when a terrorist gets waterboarded, which quite frankly is no different than what happens on college campuses and frat houses every day.”

Donald Trump has not yet made the incredible comparison of waterboarding to fraternity hazing, like his son did, but when considering what he would do that is “more” than waterboarding, perhaps we can get a clue from what Trump advocated on an appearance of *Fox and Friends* in early December. During that program, Trump proposed that the United States should target not only terrorists, but also the family members of terrorists. “The other thing with the terrorists is you have to take out their families, when you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families.... When they say they don’t care about their lives, you have to take out their families.”

Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, who has since suspended his own presidential campaign, challenged



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Trump's statement during an earlier CNN presidential debate in Las Vegas. "If you are going to kill the families of terrorists, realize that there's something called the Geneva Convention we're going to have to pull out of. It would defy every norm that is America."

Article 51.2 of the Geneva Convention states, "The civilian population as such, as well as individual civilians, shall not be the object of attack." Richard D. Rosen, director of the Center for Military Law and Policy at the Texas Tech University School of Law, explained that this does not outlaw all civilian casualties when armed forces are undertaking a military objective. But he explained that a "policy of intentionally and directly targeting the families of terrorists, assuming the family members are not combatants themselves, is a gross violation of the law of war and a war crime."

While Paul was still an active candidate, Trump dismissed him as having funny-looking hair, which is not as bad as what he called Cruz for holding a contrary view on waterboarding. And it is not even as uncouth as Trump's denigration of Carly Fiorina's face.

As disgusting as we may find these junior high type attacks upon Republican candidates who disagree with him, Trump's positions on waterboarding and the intentional targeting of civilians who might just be family members of a terrorist are even more serious.

Trump's statement that he would not only return to waterboarding, but that he would resort to a "hell of a lot worse," should concern all Americans.

Steve Byas is a professor of history at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College in Moore, Oklahoma. His book, History's Greatest Libels, is a challenge to unfair attacks upon such historical figures as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Christopher Columbus, and Joseph McCarthy.



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