

Washington think tank report calls for the use of "excessive force" and torture against Palestinians

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The Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) has published a report entitled "Peace and War: Israel versus the Palestinians—A Second Intifada" written by Anthony H. Cordesman. The document is remarkable in its open recommendation of the use of torture and repression against the Palestinian population in the current Middle East crisis.

CSIS is a Washington-based think tank with close ties to prominent Congressional leaders. Anthony Cordesman co-directs CSIS's Middle East task force, which includes, among others, Democratic vice presidential candidate Senator Joseph Lieberman and Republican Senator John McCain. He has also been a prominent military analyst for ABC News for the past 10 years.

The CSIS report on the Middle East has reportedly been widely circulated among senior US, Israeli and Palestinian Authority (PA) officials, according to the London *Independent*. It advocates the PA deal brutally with such Palestinian groups as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, arguing that "There will be no future peace, or stable peace process, if the Palestinian security forces do not act ruthlessly and effectively."

Under the subheading "The Cost-Effectiveness of Security Measures," Cordesman writes: "Every counter-terrorist force that has ever succeeded has had to act decisively and sometimes violently. Effective counter-terrorism relies on interrogation methods that border on psychological and/or physical torture, arrests and detentions that are 'arbitrary' by the standards of civil law, break-ins and intelligence operations that violate the normal rights of privacy, levels of violence in making arrests that are unacceptable in civil cases, and measures that involve the innocent (or at least not

provably directly guilty) in arrests and penalties."

The report says that the PA "must react very quickly and decisively in dealing with terrorism and violence if they are to preserve the momentum of Israeli withdrawal, the expansion of Palestinian control, and the peace process," and that "They must be able to halt terrorist and paramilitary action by Hamas and Islamic Jihad even if this means interrogations, detentions, and trials that are too rapid and lack due process."

The report also advocates and condones the use of similar methods by Israeli security forces. According to Cordesman, the Israeli forces "often have had to choose between a strict interpretation of the law and effectiveness" which "is the price of both maintaining security and Israeli political support for a peace process."

The report asserts that it is "common knowledge that Israeli intelligence has assassinated terrorist leaders," and goes on to provide a long list of probable assassinations carried out by Israeli forces from 1973 through 1996. These victims include prominent leaders of the PLO, Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, Hizbollah and other groups.

The CSIS report has been condemned by Amnesty International USA, which says that it "risks legitimizing torture." Amnesty spokesman Marty Rosenberg stated that it amounts to a "'green light' for human rights violations" in the area. "No one associated with CSIS should allow these practices to receive praise or evade condemnation," Rosenberg commented.

The Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting group (FAIR) has criticized the report and ABC News' close association with the report's author, Anthony

Cordesman. ABC has so far had no comment about their relationship with Cordesman, who frequently appears for the network both on the air and in chat rooms on ABCNews.com.

Cordesman is a long-time Washington military operative and is regarded as a mainstream figure in the national security community. Before joining CSIS he worked in Senator John McCain's office as assistant for national security. He also served as the Director of Intelligence Assessment in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (the chief analyst of military espionage). His government positions also included service in Iran and other Middle Eastern countries.

An enthusiastic supporter of the US in the Persian Gulf War, he authored a report for CSIS on Iraq's possession of “weapons of mass destruction.”

Cordesman appeared frequently on ABC television during the Kosovo war, and advocated the use of ground troops. According to one account, Cordesman frequently characterized the NATO bombing of Kosovo as overly pacifistic (complaining on the April 9, 1999 Nightline television program, for example, that “rather than use the shock of decisive amounts of force, we've sort of dribbled bits and pieces of air power slowly out over a period of weeks”).

Of late, Cordesman has shifted his focus to “homeland defense,” which encompasses both anti-terrorist planning and anti-missile system development in the US. The question needs to be asked: given his advocacy of torture and repression in the Middle East, what would be the implications of these policies as applied to domestic intelligence and police operations?



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