

Britain's Guardian newspaper says US sanctions torture against terrorist suspects

Kate Randall
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As part of his brief for war against Iraq, George W. Bush made pointed reference in last week's State of the Union address to Saddam Hussein's use of torture against his political opponents. There is no reason to doubt that the Iraqi regime employs such methods. However, Bush's pose of moral revulsion, as with everything else in his speech, was laced with hypocrisy and cynicism.

Only days before Bush's speech, the British *Guardian* newspaper detailed new accounts of United States sanction of torture and illegal interrogation of prisoners held in the wake of the September 11 terror attacks. The January 25 article by Duncan Campbell elaborated on accounts of US torture published last year in the *Washington Post* (March 11 and December 26) and summed up in two articles posted on the *World Socialist Web Site*. (See "US oversees abduction, torture, execution of alleged terrorists" and "New account of US torture of Afghan and Arab prisoners")

Wayne Madsen, a former US navy intelligence officer, told the *Guardian* that the US has been carrying out two forms of torture. The first—which Madsen refers to as "torture lite"—is being practiced on hundreds of prisoners held by the US in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. It involves the use of sleep deprivation and the prolonged exposure of detainees to bright light. This kind of torture is considered "lite" because it does not involve direct physical violence.

Civil rights lawyer Stephen Yagman, part of a group that has initiated a lawsuit on behalf of the Guantanamo prisoners, told the *Guardian* that US interrogators are employing psychological torture aimed at developing total dependency of the prisoners on their inquisitors. According to Yagman, this involves the use of "sensory deprivation to induce a feeling of depression so that they become receptive to any human contact."

The *Guardian* article went on to cite Wayne Madsen on the second kind of torture, which, he said, is being used against prisoners handed over by the US military to third-party countries, including Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, Jordan and Syria. This involves "full-blown torture techniques"—including beatings, electric shocks and other more "conventional" methods.

In its March 11, 2002 article, the *Washington Post* detailed Washington's covert campaign of abduction of terror "suspects." The report cited unnamed American diplomats and Indonesian and Pakistani government officials who recounted how the US kidnapped individuals—from Indonesia, Pakistan, the former Yugoslavia and other locations—and transferred them, without extradition procedures, to other countries, where they were often imprisoned, tortured, and, in some cases, put to death.

One obvious purpose of these abductions is to send the captured individuals to countries where there is little legal restraint on torture. The *Post* asserted that such foreign authorities work closely with the CIA, and that US agents are often on hand.

Last month's *Guardian* article reported that some prisoners had been taken to the Indian Ocean atoll of Diego Garcia, a British possession that houses US air and naval facilities. The *Guardian* wrote that at US bases on the island "interrogators have impersonated nationals of countries known to use torture, in an effort to loosen the tongues of captives."

The US has also supervised interrogation under torture of prisoners in occupied Afghanistan. The *Washington Post* reported on December 26 that captured Afghan and Arab prisoners at a top security facility inside the US military's Bagram air base were "sometimes kept standing or kneeling for hours, in black hoods or spray-painted goggles." The report

continued: “At times they are held in awkward, painful positions or deprived of sleep with a 24-hour bombardment of lights—subject to what are known as ‘stress and duress’ techniques.”

Human rights organizations estimate there are roughly 3,000 people being held outside the US by US military and intelligence agencies and foreign agencies working at their behest. The overwhelming majority of these prisoners have not been charged with any crime, and none have been connected to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions, the US has refused to grant any of them prisoner-of-war status.

Their plight, however, has received little attention in the US media. Revelations in the *Washington Post* and *Guardian* that the US sanctions the use of torture against these prisoners have been barely reported on television or in other media outlets, and have been ignored by Democratic as well as Republican politicians. Even when such abuses are noted, no conclusions are drawn concerning the policies in pursuit of which these barbaric and illegal methods are employed.

The *Washington Post* is a case in point. Its own revelations of US complicity in torture have not prevented it from accepting uncritically the Bush administration’s pretexts for international aggression and enthusiastically supporting its war drive against Iraq.



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