

FBI knew of CIA torture, considered prosecution

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Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents witnessed the torture of inmates at secret Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) overseas prisons in 2002, according to documents partially declassified in response to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the advocacy group Judicial Watch.

In September 2002, the FBI agents saw prisoners chained naked to chairs, “manacled to the ceiling and subjected to blaring music around the clock,” and knew of written orders to CIA agents asking them to compare “How close is each [interrogation] technique to the ‘rack and screw’ “ (an extreme method of torture).

The Obama administration resisted release of the documents, and continues to withhold critical information, including a transcript of an interview between FBI Director Robert Mueller and investigators on the question of “terror suspect” interrogations. The newly released documents, including a Justice Department inspector general’s report, remain highly redacted in critical sections.

Nonetheless, the new revelations fill out a few more details, adding to an overwhelming body of evidence that proves that the torture and murder of prisoners was not some aberration carried out by a handful of “rogue agents.” It was systematic, and was ordered and overseen from the Bush White House on down.

The documents “paint a very clear picture of extreme micro-managing of the CIA’s detention and interrogation program,” Alex Abdo, a legal fellow with the ACLU told *Free Speech Radio News*. “Discussions about what types of techniques to use, what specific

interrogation protocols to implement on particular detainees were occurring at a very, very high level in the Bush administration.”

“The documents released today add to our knowledge about the origins, scope and consequences of the Bush administration’s torture program,” Jameel Jaffer, Director of the ACLU’s National Security Project commented in a statement. “The documents are also a reminder, however, of gross human rights abuses that have yet to be investigated seriously by Congress or the Justice Department (DOJ).”

The documents show that the FBI was involved, albeit to a lesser extent than the CIA and the US military, in the interrogation of prisoners at Guantánamo, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and secret “black site” prisons in a number of third-party countries.

Significantly, the FBI doubted the legality of the CIA’s methods, the documents reveal. So much so, in fact, that unnamed figures in the FBI contemplated prosecuting CIA personnel for torture—among them a CIA agent who threatened to torture a prisoner with a power drill—and it ordered agents not to participate in CIA interrogation sessions in which “enhanced” techniques were used.

In another instance, an FBI agent who traveled to a secret prison seeking to interrogate Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a suspect in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, found him “naked and chained to the floor.” The agent said that he had obtained intelligence from al-Shibh in 45 minutes of interviewing him before the CIA “shut down the interview.”

Afterwards, the FBI raised concerns about its agent's participation. The interrogation "indicates that a 'bright line rule' against FBI participation or assistance to interrogations in which other investigators used non-FBI techniques was not fully established or followed," according to one of the documents.

Bin al-Shibh is currently being held at the Guantánamo Bay prison camp and may face the death penalty for his alleged role in 9/11.

Among other new revelations, the documents confirm that 24 of the 29 interrogation methods used at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison camp in Iraq were personally approved by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld had endorsed the "enhanced interrogation techniques" for use at Guantanamo in 2002, but his memo soon provided the basis for abuses in Iraq and Afghanistan. "The first 24 techniques were adopted virtually verbatim," from Rumsfeld's memo, according to a revised version of a Justice Department inspector general's report from 2008.

The Obama administration's efforts to bury the crimes of its predecessor mean that, in all probability, the same abuse is ongoing today. While the secret CIA prison gulag has been closed down—even prior to Obama's executive order issued in February—there can be little doubt that at Guantánamo, and in prisons in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in third-party countries, torture continues.

The documents "tell us very little about the current treatment of detainees," Abdo said, pointing to "the new Guantánamo, which is the Bagram air base in Afghanistan."



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