

CIA stalling release of Senate report on torture

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The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is delaying the publication of portions of the report by the US Senate Intelligence Committee on the agency's torture of prisoners at secret prisons overseas, according to an account Thursday by McClatchy News Service. This follows a similar report on Politico.com three days earlier, quoting senators on the committee criticizing the delay.

The Senate panel voted April 3 to seek declassification of key sections of its 6,200-page report into the interrogations conducted from 2002 to 2006 by CIA agents at so-called black sites, secret prisons in Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia and other regions of the world—the names of the countries involved remain classified at the insistence of the US State Department.

The committee request covers the 481-page executive summary, which includes findings and conclusions, as well as a dissenting report filed by the minority Republicans on the committee, who openly support torture, and a 122-page rebuttal by the CIA, submitted by CIA Director John Brennan, one of President Barack Obama's closest aides.

When the committee chair, Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, initially submitted the request for declassification to the White House, she said she hoped it would be completed within 30 days. However, President Obama referred the declassification to the CIA itself, insuring that the report's release would be stalled, and that there would be extensive redactions of material critical of the agency's conduct.

The CIA actually received the report in draft form in December 2012, to give it time to prepare a rebuttal, sent by Brennan to the committee last summer. The delay is thus not due to any time required to study the documents, but is simply an effort to stall the release of the material as long as possible.

In the month since the declassification was requested, McClatchy News Service obtained and published a list of 20 conclusions drawn by the Senate report. Among the most important:

- The CIA lied about the number of prisoners it was holding and torturing at the “black sites”
- Nearly a quarter of the prisoners held in the torture program were detained illegally, even by the permissive standards of the Bush administration, some 26 out of 119
- The Guantanamo Bay detention center was also a CIA black site, meaning that torture was conducted there, a fact never acknowledged by the US government
- The CIA used the British-controlled island of Diego Garcia, in the Indian Ocean, as a secret detention facility
- At least 10 of the CIA's prisoners were handed over to foreign governments and are now dead, most likely killed under interrogation or otherwise executed
- CIA agents in the field used interrogation methods that went beyond even those authorized under the Bush administration in the notorious “torture memos” drafted by Justice Department officials John Yoo and Jay Bybee
- The CIA obstructed oversight of the interrogation program by Congress, the White House and even its own Inspector General's office

Predictably, the response of Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Feinstein to the report by McClatchy was to seek a Justice Department investigation into how the bullet-point summation of its findings was leaked to the news service.

“If someone distributed any part of this classified report, they broke the law and should be prosecuted,” she said in a statement. “The committee is investigating

this unauthorized disclosure and I intend to refer the matter to the Department of Justice.”

McClatchy Washington bureau chief James Asher said in response, “We are disappointed that Sen. Feinstein plans to seek a Justice Department investigation of our journalism... We believe that Americans need to know what the CIA might have done to detainees and who is responsible for any questionable practices, which is why we have vigorously covered this story.”

Only two months ago, Feinstein took to the floor of the Senate to make the public charge that the CIA was spying on the Senate committee that has the legal responsibility to oversee the agency. She declared the agency’s actions violated the constitutional separation of powers, the Bill of Rights and laws barring CIA domestic spying.

These charges have been referred to the Senate sergeant-at-arms for investigation, while the Democratic senator now targets one of the few news outlets that has sought to inform the American public about the crimes being committed by the US government.

The author also recommends:

Senate panel votes to declassify part of report on CIA torture

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