

Obama administration grants architects of torture sneak peak at Senate Intelligence Committee report on CIA programs

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In close collaboration with the Central Intelligence Agency, President Obama has granted the masterminds of the Bush administration's torture programs access to the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on CIA torture in advance of the report's expected August publication. The report includes material gathered from the agency's "Internal Panetta Review."

The move is the most recent in a series of steps taken by the Obama administration to protect those responsible for establishing and operating an unconstitutional network of secret dungeons and torture chambers around the world.

According to a July 25 article by Mark Mazzetti in the *New York Times*, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough is not only "personally coordinating the redaction of the document," with the aid of CIA Director John Brennan and other intelligence agency leaders, but the president has agreed to allow complicit CIA officials to review the report before it is published.

The agreement was brokered by the White House at the request of current and former intelligence officials who have been meeting for months to plan their response to the review's publication.

The *Times* notes that this spring, "CIA Director John O. Brennan convened a meeting of the men who had played a role overseeing the program in its seven-year history.

"The spies, past and present, faced each other around the long wooden conference table on the seventh floor of the CIA's headquarters in Northern Virginia: J. Cofer Black, head of the agency's counterterrorism center at the time of the Sept. 11 attacks; the undercover officer who now holds that job; and a number of other former officials from the CIA's

clandestine service. Over the speakerphone came the distinctive, Queens-accented voice of [former CIA Director] George J. Tenet. Over the past several months, Mr. Tenet has quietly engineered a counterattack against the Senate committee's voluminous report, which could become public next month."

The other figures that the *Times* asserts are working closely with Tenet include Former CIA directors Porter Goss and Michael Hayden, as well as former acting directors John McLaughlin and Michael Morell. Hayden, a four-star general, also served as director of the National Security Agency from 1999 to 2005.

As a preliminary matter, the only place where the likes of Tenet, Black, Goss, Hayden, McLaughlin, and Morell should be holding meetings is on the blacktop of a prison yard. That these men—the architects of torture, war, and state-surveillance—are not only free, but remain in close collaboration with the highest levels of the executive branch, is an indictment of the state of American democracy and of the Obama administration, which has refused to prosecute them.

But the criminality of the officials' efforts to protect themselves is overshadowed by the criminality of their roles in the CIA's international campaign of torture and murder that will be exposed by the report. According to officials who have seen the documents, their contents include proof that the methods and regularity of the torture went far beyond what the Bush and Obama administrations have previously been forced to admit.

The Senate Intelligence Committee voted to release the 600-page executive summary of its report in early April, but has been stonewalled by the Obama administration, which was allowed to review the

documents before their publication, ostensibly for “national security” purposes.

The executive summary includes details from the Internal Panetta Review—a document that was commissioned by former CIA director Leon Panetta in 2009 after the torture programs were scaled back. The Obama administration intended for the contents of the Panetta Review to be kept secret not only from the public, but from the other two branches of government.

The existence of an internal review of the torture programs surfaced in March, when Senator Dianne Feinstein announced that the CIA had illegally spied on Senate staffers who were investigating the programs for the Senate report. A constitutional crisis emerged when the CIA threatened to bring criminal charges against the staffers, who obtained the review during their investigation—possibly from an agency whistle-blower or via fortuitous computer malfunction.

Those responsible for carrying out crimes against humanity in violation of international law and the US Constitution’s Eighth Amendment are justifiably fearful that the world population will respond to the findings of the Senate Intelligence Committee report with indignation and demand the arrest and prosecution of the CIA’s chief torturers and executioners.

However, the Obama administration is working hard to limit the damage done by the publication of the report and to protect those responsible for torture from criminal prosecution. For Brennan, McDonough, Obama, and Holder, this is not simply a question of protecting their friends: the highest officials in the Obama administration and military-intelligence apparatus are all complicit as aiding and abetting the crimes of the Bush administration torturers.

It is for this reason that the Obama administration’s Department of Justice issued a notice on July 10 stating that it “did not find sufficient evidence to warrant a criminal investigation” of the CIA’s surveillance of Senate staffers and the threats of criminal prosecution, despite clear Fourth Amendment and Separation of Powers violations.

The Obama administration’s repeated delays regarding the publication of the executive summary of the report have been orchestrated in order to provide government officials with ample time to redact the most damning evidence of state-sponsored torture.

The handing over of the report to those primarily

responsible for overseeing the torture programs is meant to provide those officials with the opportunity to make their own redactions and prepare possible legal defenses. The move is akin to a criminal prosecutor handing a burglar all of the evidence against him before charges are filed and then giving him the chance to go over the affidavits, out-of-court testimony, police reports, and other material with a black permanent marker.

Despite the fact that the gravity of the crimes committed by George Tenet and his ilk far surpass those of a petty thief, an entirely different set of rules applies to the former. Since leaving the CIA, Tenet has been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, has taught at Georgetown University, and has made millions of dollars advising and sitting on the corporate boards of companies such as the investment bank Allen & Company, Qinetiq defense contracting, L-1 Identity Solutions, and Analysis Corp.

Qinetiq and L-1 received lucrative contracts to make weapons and data systems for the US during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—wars which Tenet helped orchestrate. Analysis Corp. made millions designing the “terrorist watch lists” used by the National Counterterrorism Center.

In anticipation of the details to be made public through the publication of the Panetta Review, the Obama administration is doing everything in its power to ensure that George Tenet and the rest of the torturers will continue to reap the fruits of their labor.



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