

Release of Senate report on torture stalled by CIA redactions

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Senator Dianne Feinstein announced last Friday that the Senate Intelligence Committee would delay the release of a declassified summary of its voluminous report on CIA torture programs during the Bush administration due to the scale of redactions made by the US spy agency. Fifteen percent of the report's 600-page executive summary was blacked out by the CIA.

"We need additional time to understand the basis for these redactions and determine their justification," Feinstein said. "Therefore, the report will be held until further notice and released when that process is completed."

Feinstein and a handful of senators are appealing to President Obama to reduce the scale of the redactions. Obama, however, has fronted for the CIA and tacitly supported its months-long efforts to undermine the Senate probe and delay the release of the Intelligence Committee's findings.

The Obama administration has allowed CIA Director John Brennan to hold secret meetings with Bush-era CIA officials who are, like Brennan himself, directly implicated in the crimes reportedly described in the Senate report. Among those who have met to review the report and plot against it are former CIA directors George Tenet and Michael Hayden, and other former top agency officials such as J. Cofer Black, John McLaughlin, Porter Goss and Michael Morell. No doubt the extensive redactions made by the CIA were discussed by these officials.

Last week Brennan, chosen by Obama for the top agency post after having served as the White House's chief counter-terrorism adviser and heading up its drone assassination program, was exposed as a liar when the CIA inspector general reported that the agency had indeed hacked into computers being used

by Senate committee staff conducting the probe. Last March, Brennan denied that his agency had spied on the Senate after Feinstein denounced him on the floor of the Senate for violating the separation of powers laid down by the US Constitution and attacking the Senate committee charged with overseeing CIA activities.

The military-intelligence apparatus responded with indignation to Feinstein's request that there be fewer redactions. The CIA declined to comment, but Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, who perjured himself before Congress last year when he denied the existence of the massive NSA spying programs subsequently exposed by Edward Snowden, issued a three-sentence statement.

"More than 85 percent of the Committee Report has been declassified," the statement reads. "The redactions were the result of an extensive and unprecedented interagency process, headed up by my office, to protect sensitive classified information."

If the redaction process was "unprecedented," it was not in the sense stated by Clapper. Obama essentially gave those guilty of crimes against the Constitution and the democratic rights of the American people the power to select the evidence against them that would be made public.

The fact that they chose to redact one-sixth of the summary report—or 90 pages—is a further demonstration of the unchecked powers of the unelected cabal of spies and generals and the de facto subordination of all other official institutions, including the presidency, Congress and the courts to it.

According to US officials who spoke to VICE news, the CIA "vehemently opposed" the inclusion of material in the report because it reveals "specific" details about the types of torture methods employed, how victims were held captive, and the role played by

foreign governments working with the CIA.

The officials told VICE that the Senate report includes evidence that the CIA systematically used torture techniques that went beyond even those approved in the infamous “torture memo” written by Bush administration attorneys John Yoo and Jay Bybee. Officials assert that the details of the report highlight the “cruelty” of the programs.

In a statement made last week, Obama said, “We tortured some folks.” Having made this astonishing admission of criminal activity by the US government, he went on to offer rationalizations and justifications. “I understand why it happened,” he declared. “I think it’s important when we look back to recall how afraid people were after the Twin Towers fell and the Pentagon had been hit and the plane in Pennsylvania had fallen, and people did not know if more attacks were justified.”

This is a contemptible attempt to foist the blame for torture on the entire US population. At the same time, Obama opposes any effort to hold those actually responsible legally accountable for their crimes.

At the same press conference where he admitted that the US government engaged in torture, he declared his “full confidence” in Brennan, who had just been exposed as having lied to the Senate and the public. He then went on to praise the torturers, saying, “It’s important for us not to feel too sanctimonious in retrospect about the tough job these folks had. And a lot of these folks were working hard under enormous pressure, and are real patriots.”



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