

Obama administration continues to obstruct release of CIA torture report

Tom Carter
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The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Obama administration are attempting to censor key facts from a long-delayed Senate report on the agency's illegal torture program. Secret negotiations between the Senate Intelligence Committee and the CIA regarding the censorship of the report, which has remained unpublished for nearly two years, continue to delay its release with no end in sight.

The Senate Intelligence Committee announced the completion of its 6,000-page report on the CIA's torture program in December 2012, following an investigation that began in 2009. The committee does not intend to release the full report. Instead, it has prepared a 500-page "executive summary" for publication. However, the Obama administration has thus far successfully prevented the release of the summary to the public.

On August 1, the CIA transmitted proposed redactions of the executive summary to the Senate Intelligence Committee. Subsequent negotiations over these proposed redactions have bogged down, preventing any portion of the summary from being released through official channels.

According to a report last week in the *Huffington Post*, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough has played a key role in the negotiations over the redactions. The presence of McDonough, a very high-ranking official in the American political establishment with a full portfolio of other responsibilities, is suggestive of a profound crisis mounting behind closed doors.

The CIA apparently proposed so many redactions that the document was rendered unintelligible. "I have concluded the redactions eliminate or obscure key facts that support the report's findings and conclusions," Senator Diane Feinstein, a California Democrat and the

committee chairperson, declared in a recent statement. "Until these redactions are addressed to the committee's satisfaction, the report will not be made public."

Director of National Intelligence (DNI) James Clapper is overseeing the CIA's redaction of the Senate report. "More than 85 percent of the Committee Report has been declassified," he said in a three-sentence statement. "The redactions were the result of an extensive and unprecedented interagency process, headed up by my office, to protect sensitive classified information."

Senator Mark Udall, a Democrat and a member of the committee, acknowledged Clapper's "85 percent figure," but replied, "it is also true that strategically placed redactions can make a narrative incomprehensible."

In a report last week in the *Intercept*, journalist Dan Froomkin considered whether the Obama administration was trying to stall the report's publication until after the upcoming mid-term elections in November, with a possible victory for the Republicans in Congress. "Continued White House foot-dragging on the declassification of a much-anticipated Senate torture report is raising concerns that the administration is holding out until Republicans take over the chamber and kill the report themselves," he wrote.

The CIA's insistence on censoring evidence of its own criminality, together with the acquiescence of the rest of the political establishment, underscores once again the craven prostration of the civilian branches of government before the military and intelligence apparatus.

The entire political establishment is bracing itself for the public reaction to the report, which apparently

contains evidence of brutal torture by the CIA. “They weren’t just pouring water over their heads or over a cloth,” an unnamed source told the *Telegraph* last month. “They were holding them under water until the point of death, with a doctor present to make sure they did not go too far. This was real torture.” (See: CIA employed “medieval” torture that brought prisoners “to the point of death”) To date, nobody has been prosecuted or otherwise held accountable in connection with the CIA’s torture program. Instead, the criminals responsible for the program continue to hold high positions in the Obama administration.

During the Senate Intelligence Committee’s investigation, the CIA took the position that it could keep documents secret from the committee. Since the Senate Intelligence Committee is charged with oversight of the CIA, the CIA’s position raises the question: If the Senate Intelligence Committee is not entitled to know the nature of the CIA’s activities, then who is?

From the moment president Obama took office, his administration has worked zealously to shield Bush-era criminals from accountability. On November 9, 2005, the CIA destroyed 90 tapes depicting its interrogations of Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri at a secret “black site” in Thailand, which included the use of torture. The Obama administration allowed the deadline to initiate criminal prosecutions to lapse. (See: White House rejects criminal charges in CIA destruction of torture videos)

Clapper himself was exposed perjuring himself before Congress in relation to NSA spying. Instead of prosecuting him, the Obama administration has tasked him with continuing to obstruct the discovery of the truth about the activities of the intelligence agencies.

It was none other than President Obama, in fact, who appointed John Brennan to head the CIA. A high-level CIA official in the Bush administration, Brennan had advocated the use of “enhanced interrogation techniques.”

The CIA’s campaign to censor the Senate’s report regarding its illegal activities is the latest chapter in the unfolding constitutional crisis involving the CIA. Earlier this year, in an extraordinary speech on the Senate floor, Feinstein revealed that the CIA had broken into the computers of staff working for the Senate Intelligence Committee and had erased

documents that exposed CIA criminality.

According to a report last week in the *Huffington Post*, CIA agents actually impersonated Senate staffers in order to gain access to their computers. “If people knew the details of what they actually did to hack into the Senate computers to go search for the torture document, jaws would drop. It’s straight out of a movie,” an unnamed source told *Huffington Post* reporters Ali Watkins and Ryan Grim.

The *Huffington Post* also reported on a dispute between the Senate Intelligence Committee and the CIA over allegations from the former that the CIA deleted “crucial computer records” relating to the Senate’s Sergeant-at-Arms’ investigation into spying on the Senate.

The Obama administration subsequently announced that there would be no prosecutions in connection with this flagrant constitutional breach.

The CIA’s ability to violate the constitution with impunity—and then dictate terms to the rest of the political establishment—can only be understood in the context of the ongoing collapse of what little remains of bourgeois democracy and the rule of law in the US. Meanwhile, the military-police-intelligence apparatus, emboldened by each successive episode, grows ever more menacing, obstinate, and independent.



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