

Chicago Police Department operates “black site” interrogation compound

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On Tuesday, the *Guardian* revealed the existence of a secret interrogation facility operated by the Chicago Police Department, in what the newspaper called “the domestic equivalent of a CIA black site.”

The article comes less than a week after the newspaper revealed that Richard Zuley, who was recruited to torture prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, had used similar torture methods as a police detective in Chicago.

That exposé inspired lawyers in the city, as well as Brian Jacob Church, one of the “NATO Three” protesters arrested on charges of terrorism in 2012, to come forward and share their experiences at the secret detention center, known as Homan Square.

The *Guardian*’s sources allege that at Homan Square, officers regularly carry out prolonged shackling and severe beatings of detainees, often inflicting head wounds. The newspaper reports that, “At least one man was found unresponsive in a Homan Square ‘interview room’ and later pronounced dead.”

Detainees, including those as young as 15, have been held at the site for up to 24 hours, denying them their constitutional right to legal counsel. All non-officers are denied access to the “secure” facility, and arrestees are intentionally kept out of any booking databases while at Homan Square.

Chicago lawyer Julia Bartmes told the *Guardian*, “It’s sort of an open secret among attorneys that regularly make police station visits, this place—if you can’t find a client in the system, odds are they’re there.”

Anthony Hill, a criminal defense attorney, told the newspaper, “They just disappear, until they show up at a district for charging or are just released back out on the street.”

Following the police raid that led to his arrest in

2012, Church was held at Homan Square for roughly 20 hours. He was handcuffed to a bench for approximately 17 hours straight, with officers “intermittently interrogating him without reading his Miranda rights to remain silent.”

Church said, “I had essentially figured, ‘All right, well, they disappeared us and so we’re probably never going to see the light of day again.’”

Three hours later, after Church’s lawyer, Sarah Gelsomino, was able to track him down, “he was finally charged with terrorism-related offenses at the nearby 11th district station, where he was made to sign papers, fingerprinted and photographed.”

On February 2, 2013, John Hubbard, 44, died in an interrogation room at Homan Square. To this day, police have not officially stated why Hubbard was taken into custody or what led to his death, and the Cook County medical examiner’s office was unable to find any autopsy report stating the cause of his death.

Eliza Solowiej of Chicago’s First Defense Legal Aid told the *Guardian* that in January 2013 officers changed the name of her client in the Chicago central bookings database, and then took him to Homan Square without leaving any record of his transfer to the site. After searching for 6-8 hours, Solowiej only learned of his whereabouts after he was taken to nearby Mt. Sinai Hospital with a head injury.

Chicago civil-rights attorney Flint Taylor told the *Guardian* that “This Homan Square revelation seems to me to be an institutionalization of the practice that dates back more than 40 years, of violating a suspect or witness’ rights to a lawyer and not to be physically or otherwise coerced into giving a statement.”

Chicago’s police superintendent from 1980-1983, Richard Brzeczek, said that Homan Square became a site for police activity in the late 1990s. Anti-gang,

wiretapping and anti-drug police units conduct much of their work out of Homan Square, which they use as an off-the-books interrogation site.

Homan Square is located less than 10 miles from the headquarters of Chicago's District 2 police station, known as "Area 2." This station is infamously known as the site where police tortured hundreds of poor, mostly African American prisoners from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, under the leadership of former Chicago police commander John Burge.

It is suspected that former Chicago mayor Richard Daley and Cook County state's attorney Richard Devine were privy to the ongoing use of torture, as they repeatedly declined to investigate charges against Area 2, eventually leading the statute of limitations to expire for any crimes committed by officers at the station.

Cook County, where Chicago is located, has already received roughly 1,700 pieces of military equipment, including a Humvee, through the Pentagon's 1033 program, which is intended to arm local police with military-grade hardware. To date, at least 161 people have been killed by police in the US since the start of 2015.

The ongoing revelations of the use of torture and indefinite detention by police in the United States show that methods pioneered in the name of fighting "terrorism" abroad are increasingly being brought back to the US for use against the population. The ultimate aim of these methods will be to violently suppress any opposition to war and social inequality.



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