Chicago's Abu Ghraib

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In April 2004, the world was shocked and horrified by the release of photographs of sadistic torture carried out by US military personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Detainees at the prison, most of them locked up for opposing the US military occupation, were beaten, tortured, sexually assaulted and killed.

At the time, the *World Socialist Web Site* explained that the crimes revealed in the photos and the psychology underlying them could be understood only in relation to the brutality of social relations in the United States, together with the dirty colonial aims of the war itself.

The WSWS further warned that "such a military, accompanied by a growing army of professional 'civilian' mercenaries, represents a danger not only to oppressed peoples in the Middle East, Central Asia and elsewhere, but to the democratic rights of the population in the US."

A decade later, this assessment has been fully borne out. On Tuesday, the *Guardian* newspaper revealed the existence of what it describes as a "black site" on the West Side of Chicago, where police detain, beat and torture prisoners, while keeping their whereabouts secret from their families and attorneys.

The newspaper writes: "The Chicago police department operates an off-the-books interrogation compound, rendering Americans unable to be found by family or attorneys while locked inside what lawyers say is the domestic equivalent of a CIA black site."

Among those detained at the facility was Brian Jacob Church, one of the "NATO 3" who were entrapped by Chicago police in 2012 in connection with protests against the US-led military alliance, which was meeting in Chicago.

Church was taken to the secret facility and handcuffed to a bench for 17 hours. Along with two other protestors, he was set up by police on terrorism charges and subsequently sentenced to five years in prison.

Vic Suter, another participant in the protests, said that she was taken to the facility and interrogated while shackled to a bench for eighteen hours before she was allowed to see a lawyer.

The *Guardian* writes that detainees taken to the facility report having been beaten and otherwise tortured by police. In 2013, one detainee was found unconscious in an interview room at the facility. He later died.

On Thursday, the *Intercept* corroborated the *Guardian*'s account, interviewing another torture victim at the facility who was handcuffed across a bench and hit in the face and groin until he agreed to provide false testimony to police.

The revelations follow the report last week by the *Guardian* that Richard Zuley, one of the lead torturers at the Guantanamo detention center, used similar techniques to secure false confessions from murder suspects when he was a detective with the Chicago Police Department.

Chicago has a long history of police violence. It is also the political home of Barack Obama and has been run since 2011 by Rahm Emanuel, Obama's former White House chief of staff.

The Obama administration, far from repudiating the horrific and criminal actions of its predecessor, has deployed the apparatus of police violence ever more directly against the American people. A series of events has marked the increasingly open application within the borders of the United States of the murderous methods of the "war on terror" tested out and perfected in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Somalia and Yemen.

· In September 2010, the Obama administration ordered raids on the homes of leaders of the Anti-War Committee and the Freedom Road Socialist Organization in Minneapolis and Chicago on charges of

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"providing material support to terrorism."

· In May 2012, Chicago police arrested the "NATO 3," charging them with conspiracy to commit terrorism.

· In March 2013, US Attorney General Eric Holder declared that the president had the right to kill American citizens without a trial or any legal due process, including within the borders of the United States.

· Just one month later, in April 2013, the city of Boston was placed under de facto martial law following the Boston Marathon bombings, with residents told to "shelter in place" while armored vehicles and helicopters patrolled the streets and police carried out warrantless house-to-house searches.

· In June 2014, the American Civil Liberties Union released a report entitled "War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing." The ACLU reported that the Defense Department had transferred $4.3 billion in military hardware, including armored vehicles, helicopters, and belt-fed machine guns, to local police departments.

· In August 2014, the authorities responded to protests against the police murder of unarmed teenager Michael Brown with a military/police crackdown. Hundreds of peaceful protesters were arrested, shot with rubber bullets or exposed to tear gas, and over a dozen members of the press were detained.

The Obama administration is presently seeking a new Authorization for Use of Military Force, nominally to fight the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), but with no geographical boundaries defined. On Wednesday, three Brooklyn residents were arrested in connection with this new war on ISIS, clearly raising the potential for this second "war on terror" to become an occasion for police-military operations within the US "homeland."

These developments express the growing convergence of militarism abroad with the attack on democratic rights within the US. What ties these two processes together are the class interests of the financial aristocracy and the criminal methods it employs in the defense of its wealth and power.

In pursuit of these aims, the ruling class seeks to mobilize the most backward and reactionary sections of the population, including sadistic prison guards and fascist-minded police detectives. But the ultimate responsibility for these crimes rests with forces at the highest levels of the state.

It is worth recalling that late last year the Senate released a report implicating the Bush administration in a brutal torture regime carried out at Guantanamo and CIA "black site" torture centers throughout the world. Far from anyone being held accountable for these crimes, those who ordered and carried them out have defended their actions, while the Obama administration has sought to block any prosecution of those responsible.

The actions of the ruling class express the character of American capitalism, which is based on parasitism, fraud, criminality and an economic order in deep decline. The American ruling class has no response to the crisis of its system and the inevitable growth of social opposition other than violence and repression.

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