

Guantanamo detainee details CIA sexual abuse and torture

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Newly-released testimony from Guantanamo Bay prisoner Majid Khan has shown that the CIA used torture practices that were “far more brutal and sadistic” than even those revealed by the Senate report on torture released last year.

In interviews with his attorneys first publicized in a Reuters report Tuesday, Khan described being hung from rafters for days at a time, submerged in ice water, and sexually abused by his guards and interrogators, who were frequently intoxicated with alcohol during the torture sessions.

Khan’s experiences were detailed in 27 pages of notes taken by a team of attorneys from the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), with whom he was able to meet only after protracted efforts by the White House to block his access to legal counsel.

“The CIA has repeatedly and continuously lied about the torture program,” CCR attorney Wells Dixon noted in response to the publication of portions of the notes.

“As layers of secrecy have been peeled away throughout the Obama administration, we see more and more evidence of CIA savagery,” Dixon said.

When the torture programs were launched, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) maintained publicly that its agents used “enhanced interrogation techniques,” i.e., scientifically designed forms of torture “lite,” designed to inflict mere moderate levels of suffering short of full-blown torture.

During the rollout of “enhanced interrogation” by the Bush administration, the corporate media treated the American people to slick computer-generated demonstrations of the various “stress positions,” “waterboarding,” etc, which presented the interrogation programs as precise methods, applied in a limited fashion for the purpose of stopping terror attacks against the US.

The latest revelations from Khan make clear that at the main US prison camp, Guantanamo Bay, the reality was far closer to the scenes of medieval dungeons traditionally associated with torture in the public imagination.

There is little doubt about the credibility of Khan’s

testimony, given that it fully corroborates the claims made last September by a CIA inside source to *The Telegraph*.

“They got medieval on his ass, and far more so than people realize,” the CIA source told the British paper last year. “They weren’t just pouring water over their heads or over a cloth. 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.”

In his extensive testimony, Khan paints a picture of Guantanamo as a depraved environment in which the US government’s professional interrogators were given free rein to abuse and terrorize prisoners at will.

Khan’s description of being pulled from his cell late at night for impromptu torture sessions by guards reeking of alcohol suggests that conditions at Guantanamo have degenerated to the point that torture is being carried as a form of entertainment.

The CIA maintained since 2004 that its practice of “waterboarding” detainees consisted of pouring water over the faces of subjects for “no more than 20 seconds.”

Substantiating the claims of the CIA source cited by *The Telegraph* last September, Khan describes “waterboarding” incidents from May and July 2003 that amounted to near drowning in ice water, providing grisly new details about what “waterboarding” has actually looked like in practice.

According to his account, Khan was slowly submerged feet first in a tub of ice water, while shackled and hooded, and held underwater until the verge of drowning.

“Khan was forced into the tub and held down on his back, his hands were shackled underneath him and the arch of his back forced his head to tilt backwards into the water at an angle. A cloth hood remained on his face as the guards forced his body down into the tub. One of the interrogators held a bucket filled with water and large chunks of ice over his head. The interrogator poured the water and ice into Khan’s mouth and nose as well as on his genitals from a high distance. As the interrogator poured the tub began to fill up. Khan could not breathe and water went into his lungs,” the notes compiled by Khan’s lawyers read.

Such water torture sessions punctuated the several years Khan spent in solitary confinement, including being held in complete darkness continuously for much of 2003 while caged in a bare cell with an uncovered bucket for a toilet, no toilet paper, a sleeping mat and no light.

“It is clear that the CIA interrogators were completely out of control,” Khan’s lawyer said in comments to the *Telegraph* this week.

“What happened to men like Majid Khan is far more brutal and sadistic than has been revealed in the Senate report or any of the other prior public disclosures,” he said. The torture report published by the US Senate last year only covered “the tip of the iceberg.”

Apparently following the advice of US government psychologists specializing in torture, interrogators issued threats against Khan’s family, including his young sister, throughout his detention.

Prior to his capture and rendition to a CIA black site torture camp in Afghanistan during a March 2003 visit with his wife in Pakistan, Khan was a legal US resident who attended high school and lived with family near Baltimore, Maryland, working for his father.

Khan was moved to the Guantanamo Bay prison camp in 2006, where he has been held since, prevented from meeting his young daughter.

Khan’s testimony to the CCR legal team represents a major deepening of the growing body of evidence implicating the entire US ruling class in unpardonable crimes. Major abuses reported by CCR include:

* “As described in the Senate Intelligence Committee Report, Khan was raped while in CIA custody (‘rectal feeding’). He was sexually assaulted in other ways as well, including by having his ‘private parts’ touched while he was hung naked from the ceiling.”

* “They would come in with a bag of tools and set them down next to Majid. They would pull out a hammer and show it to Majid. One of them threatened to hammer Majid’s head. They sometimes smelled like alcohol.”

* “Interrogators and guards at a black site hung Khan by his hands from a wooden beam for three days. He was naked and shackled. He was provided with water but no food.”

* “When a physician came to examine him, Khan begged for help. In response, the physician instructed the guards to take Khan back into the interrogation room with the metal bar and hang him. Khan remained hanging there for another 24 hours before being interrogated again and forced to write his own ‘confession’ while being filmed naked.”

The Senate report acknowledged that Khan was raped and sexually abused by his captors, including through insertion of tubes into his anus as part of the practice referred to by CIA interrogators as “rectal feeding,” and subjected to

blows against his genitals while hanging from the ceiling of an interrogation chamber.

For all this, the US Senate torture report released last year acknowledged that Khan’s torture never produced any intelligence of value.

Khan’s account represents yet another blow against protracted efforts of the US government to conceal the unbridled savagery that reigns inside its torture facilities.

The Senate’s torture report, for all its limited exposures, was quickly buried by the media. Despite containing significant revelations, the Senate report itself was extensively redacted under the oversight of Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, undoubtedly to remove accounts of the types of brutality related by Khan.

The suppression of the Senate report is the culmination of years of deception by the CIA and the executive branch to cover up the true nature and scale of the US government’s torture program.

In 2005, the CIA destroyed at least 90 video recordings of CIA torture sessions conducted in recent years. Jose Rodriguez, head of the CIA’s covert wing, the National Clandestine Service, has since received effective legal immunity from the Obama administration. In 2010 the White House announced that the US government would not prosecute him for overseeing destruction of evidence.

Barack Obama finally acknowledged that the US government organized torture on a mass scale in remarks last year. “We tortured some folks,” the president said, referring to the grave violation of US and international law and crimes against humanity.

Obama then proceeded to express his “full confidence” in CIA Director John Brennan, a central player in the erection of the torture apparatus and in the Obama administration’s drone wars. Far from being held accountable, those most directly involved in establishing the American gulag have been protected and elevated to the highest levels of the state during the Obama years.



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