

Torture, murder and Donald Trump

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Only four days after his public defense of torture and “a hell of a lot worse” in US military-intelligence interrogations, billionaire Donald Trump added assassination to his foreign policy arsenal as well. Speaking Wednesday on the “CBS This Morning” program, Trump said that his solution to the US conflict with North Korea over its nuclear weapons program would be to eliminate North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

“I would get China to make that guy disappear in one form or another very quickly,” Trump told interviewer Norah O’Donnell. When she followed up by asking if that meant having Kim Jong-un assassinated, Trump replied, “Well, I’ve heard of worse things, frankly. I mean, this guy’s a bad dude.”

Trump was responding to the declaration by US Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, who told a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing Tuesday that Pyongyang had made progress in developing both nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and could conceivably reach parts of the United States with a nuclear warhead.

The billionaire demagogue, fresh off a victory in the New Hampshire primary Tuesday that confirmed his status as the frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination, said the US government could engineer Kim’s removal through China. Beijing has “absolute control” over North Korea, he said, and “I would force the Chinese to do it—economically.”

“I wouldn’t leave it up to them. I would say, ‘You gotta do it. You gotta do it,’” Trump said.

If China refuses, he said he would repeat the demand and “do it a little more forcefully.”

Trump was escalating the thuggish, gangster language that has been the hallmark of his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. At last Saturday’s debate in New Hampshire, he declared his support for waterboarding, adding, “I would bring back

waterboarding and I’d bring back a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding.”

At a campaign rally the next day, Trump used a vulgar term for Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, one of his major rivals for the nomination, because Cruz expressed some reservations about waterboarding, suggesting that its use should be infrequent rather than widespread.

The candidate took the same tack in a series of appearances on Sunday network television interview programs. On CNN, NBC and ABC he was asked about his comments on waterboarding, and each instance he reiterated his support for torture, although he declined to spell out what methods of interrogation would be “a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding.”

On CNN, interviewer Jake Tapper pointed out that US law bans treatment of prisoners that causes “serious and nontransitory mental harm,” like waterboarding, then asked Trump, “How would you bring it back, if it is currently a war crime under US law?”

Trump responded, “I would go through a process and get it declassified, frankly.” He portrayed this form of torture as necessary retribution for the methods of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, even if it was ineffective in extracting information. “They laugh at us when they hear that we’re not going to approve waterboarding,” he said, “and then they will have a James Foley and others where they cut off their heads. And, you know, you can say what you want. I have no doubt that it does work in terms of information and other things, and maybe not always, but nothing works always. But I have no doubt that it works. But, more importantly, when they’re chopping off the heads of people, and innocent people in most cases, beyond waterboarding is fine with me.”

On NBC’s “Meet the Press” program, interviewer Chuck Todd asked Trump what was worse than waterboarding, but Trump declined to define it.

Todd suggested, referring to ISIS, “They want to be barbaric. We’re not barbaric.” Trump disagreed, declaring, “OK. They can do it, but we can’t?” Then he added, “You can do waterboarding and you can go a step beyond waterboarding. It wouldn’t bother me even a little bit.”

On the ABC program “This Week,” interviewer George Stephanopoulos asked directly, “As president, you would authorize torture?” Trump replied, “I would absolutely authorize something beyond waterboarding. And believe me, it will be effective. If we need information, George, you have our enemy cutting heads off of Christians and plenty of others, by the hundreds, by the thousands.”

This exchange followed:

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do we win by being more like them?

TRUMP: Yes. I’m sorry. You have to do it that way. And I’m not sure everybody agrees with me. I guess a lot of people don’t. We are living in a time that’s as evil as any time that there has ever been. You know, when I was a young man, I studied Medieval times. That’s what they did, they chopped off heads. That’s what we have ...

STEPHANOPOULOS: So we’re going to chop off heads?

TRUMP: We’re going to do things beyond waterboarding perhaps, if that happens to come.

Stephanopoulos was the only interviewer to pose the torture question to another candidate, in this case Florida Senator Marco Rubio, a Republican. Rubio declared that there shouldn’t be public discussion of specific interrogation techniques, such as waterboarding, to avoid alerting suspected terrorists. But he made it clear he had no differences with Trump on resuming waterboarding and other forms of torture-interrogation.

With that, the corporate-controlled media has turned the page, more or less dropping the subject. The question was not raised during the saturation coverage of the New Hampshire primary Tuesday. Network television news broadcasts on Wednesday did not mention Trump’s call to assassinate Kim Jong-un or his campaign for torture.

Significantly, neither Democratic candidate, Senator Bernie Sanders or former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, criticized Trump for his embrace of torture and

murder. Clinton, of course, has her own record of endorsing barbarism, with her notorious comment during the US-NATO war against Libya, referring laughingly to the torture and murder of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, “We came. We saw. He died.”

Clinton was part of the Obama administration during the initial campaign of drone missile assassinations, including the killing of Anwar al-Awlaki in 2011 and his teenage son two weeks afterward. She was in the cabinet when Obama made his decision to block any prosecution of CIA officials for torture, when he suppressed evidence of torture, including graphic photos, and while the CIA fought a protracted battle against the release of the Senate Intelligence Committee report on torture.



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