

US, UAE operate network of torture chambers in Yemen

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27 June 2017

The United States and United Arab Emirates (UAE), in coordination with Yemeni proxy forces, are operating a network of torture chambers in the war-torn country into which hundreds of men have been disappeared.

As revealed by an Associated Press (AP) report published last week, the US and UAE have established a network of at least 18 secret prisons in Yemen used for torturing and interrogating men who are suspected of having ties to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

The brutal torture regime began under the Obama administration and continues under President Donald Trump.

According to the AP report, the US operates with a mostly hands-off approach in which it provides lists of names of men to be detained and then provides the torturers with lists of questions to be asked to detainees. After tormenting and interrogating detainees, the UAE transmits transcripts and videos of confessions to US officials.

However, a Yemeni officer reported to the AP that he witnessed at least two detainees brought to ships off the coast of Yemen where the US Navy regularly patrols. The prisoners were taken below deck to be interrogated by what the officer described as American polygraph and psychological experts.

While US military officials denied that they interrogate Yemenis on boats off the coast, a spokesman for the CIA refused to comment when asked by the AP about the allegations.

Yemen Interior Minister Hussein Arab admitted that detainees have also been flown across the Red Sea to a military base in Eritrea run by the UAE.

US defense officials, speaking to the AP on a condition of anonymity, confirmed that American forces participate in interrogations in Yemen. They also

reported that senior US military officials were aware of the allegations of abuse at prisons in Yemen but none of the torture had been carried out when US military personnel were present.

Among the medieval horrors described by former detainees include the “grill,” in which a prisoner is tied to a spit and rotated in a circle of fire like a piece of meat. A former detainee described an incident in which guards lit a fire under the metal shipping container he and others were being kept in as a means of filling it with smoke and tormenting the men inside.

Other former detainees at the main detention facility in the port city of Mukalla report being crammed into shipping containers smeared with human feces and being blindfolded for weeks at a time. The prisoners were subjected to repeated beatings and sexual assault by guards as well as whippings with electrical wires.

A member of the Hadramawt Elite, a proxy force set up by the UAE, reported that at times US forces were only yards away when inmates were being subjected to these abuses.

Whether or not American soldiers or intelligence agents were present during interrogations, receiving intelligence obtained through torture is a violation of the International Convention Against Torture and is considered a war crime.

In conjunction with the AP report, Human Rights Watch released a report documenting the cases of 49 of the nearly 2,000 men who have been swept up by this torture network. At least four of the 49 were children, who had been arbitrarily arrested or forcibly disappeared and kept in prison along with adults.

A former detainee at the Central Prison in the southern city of Aden reported that seven to eight boys between the ages of 15 and 17 had been in the same prison ward when he was detained in 2016. The

children described being blindfolded and beaten by guards who threatened to strip off their clothes.

Former president Obama, who infamously quipped that “we tortured some folks,” spearheaded the effort to whitewash the global torture regime established by the George W. Bush administration in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Much was made about Obama’s moves in 2009 to shut down the secret black site torture centers that spanned the globe from Thailand and Poland.

Despite Obama’s promises and phony posturing, the notorious prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, remains open. During the 2016 election campaign, Donald Trump promised that he would “load [Guantanamo] up with some bad dudes.”

Obama’s insistence to “look forward, as opposed to looking backwards” in regards to the war crimes committed by the CIA and the military under his predecessor ensured the continuation of the criminal abuses American imperialism relies on in its efforts to assert its dominance over the entire planet, both under his own administration and that of his successor.

The US has been carrying out an undeclared drone war against AQAP in Yemen since late December 2009. In the last eight years there have been at least 253 confirmed drone strikes, killing as many as 1,226 people including 49 children. Obama ordered a number of drone strikes that targeted American citizens for death in Yemen, including Anwar al Awlaki who was assassinated in 2011.

In 2015 Saudi Arabia, the UAE and their other Arab allies, with the full backing of the United States, launched a brutal war in Yemen to push back Houthi militants who took over much of the country, and reinstate the ousted President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. The Saudi-led assault has killed more than 12,000 people, pushed 7 million to the brink of starvation and sparked a cholera epidemic which threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands.

Since Trump took office earlier this year, US Special Forces have increased their activity on the ground in Yemen, carrying out raids and providing support to the UAE and its various proxy militias. Dozens of people, including the eight-year-old daughter of al Awlaki, were killed in January by US Special Forces in a raid on a purported AQAP compound in central Yemen.

The efforts under Obama and now Trump to assert control over Yemen, which borders the geostrategic oil

transit choke point of the Bab el Mandeb strait, is part of ongoing efforts to neutralize Iran as a regional power capable of blocking or limiting the predations of US imperialism in the Middle East and Persian Gulf.



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