

Cables document CIA Director Haspel's direct role in torture at black site in Thailand

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Declassified cables released last Friday provide irrefutable evidence that the current CIA director, Gina Haspel, played a direct role in the torture of detainees at a CIA black site in Thailand in 2002. The National Security Archive obtained the documents through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit. Haspel was chief of base at “Detention Site Green” (also known as “Cat’s Eye”) and either wrote or authorized the cables.

The publication of the damning cables was given short shrift by the corporate media. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* each published only one article on the story in their August 10 editions. Both newspapers placed the story on their inside pages and buried it thereafter.

Haspel, tapped by Trump earlier this year to succeed Mike Pompeo, who was promoted to secretary of state, served as acting director beginning last April 26 and became director on May 26. The Democrats supplied the necessary votes to assure her confirmation by the Senate following hearings in May. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearings on Haspel’s nomination provided a revealing exposure of the criminality of the US intelligence apparatus as well as the disintegration of bourgeois democratic processes in the United States.

The hearing was characterized by gushing tributes by both Democrats and Republicans for the work of an agency long ago dubbed “Murder, Inc.” for its crimes around the world, including the organization of political assassinations, the creation of terrorist armies and the orchestration of fascist-military coups.

West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin, who after the hearing became the first Democrat to announce his support for the nomination, went so far as to tell Haspel that when speaking to constituents, “I brag about what you people do in the Clandestine Services.”

The CIA has redacted Haspel’s name from the released cables, as well as those of CIA contract psychologists James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen. The three were identified in a Senate Intelligence Committee torture report declassified and released in 2014, which documented the grisly and illegal torture methods sanctioned by the George W. Bush administration following the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington DC.

President Obama and his CIA chief, John Brennan, blocked the release of the report for months, and Brennan had his agents hack into the computers of Senate Intelligence Committee staff who were drafting the report. Obama blocked any prosecution of Bush officials, including Brennan himself, a high-ranking CIA official during the Republican administration, who were involved in the torture program.

The 16 cables from Haspel published by the National Security Archive document scenes fit for a medieval dungeon. The CIA’s victims endured waterboarding, a technique in which water is poured through a cloth placed over the victim’s mouth and nose, inducing drowning; walling, i.e., having one’s back and head slammed repeatedly into a wall; forced nudity, hooding and shackling, confinement in a small box, sleep deprivation and other forms of physical and psychological torture.

Haspel was also involved in the 2005 destruction of CIA tapes of torture sessions sought by the courts.

The documents identify the victim as Abd Al-Rahim Al-Nashiri, a Saudi national and member of Al Qaeda, who endured at least 16 days of unabated torture before he was moved to another facility. Sixteen years later, Al-Nashiri is a detainee at the Guantanamo Bay prison camp in Cuba. A psychological expert has described him as “one of the most damaged victims of torture”

she has ever examined.

The first torture session of Al-Nashiri took place on November 15, 2002. “At 0415 hours, HVT [high-value target] interrogators, security team members and linguist entered the cell,” the first cable states. “The rolled towel/neck support was placed around his neck, and subject was moved to the walling board.”

When it was deemed that Al-Nashiri had not divulged a sufficient amount of information, the interrogators “immediately used the attention grab with the rolled towel/neck support to move subject off the wall and down on to the floor of the cell. Subject’s clothes were ripped off of him by security team members while the interrogator told subject we knew he was lying...”

The interrogators threatened Al-Nashiri, stating that “if he refused to cooperate he would suffer in ways he never thought possible.” The security team then forcibly shaved his head while he “moaned and wailed.” Finally, the security team locked him in a box roughly the size of a coffin.

Another document reveals that at a subsequent torture session, interrogators locked al-Nashiri in an even smaller box, requiring that he curl up in order to fit inside.

The cables describe as many as three torture sessions a day. The victim spent the majority of this time nude and shackled in a containment box, allowed only liquid food. When he gave information that interrogators believed to be true, he was “given solid food and allowed to sleep on the floor of his cell with a mat and a towel to cover himself.” On day 12 of his confinement, his interrogators began routinely waterboarding him.

One particular cable from December 1 describes a torture session in lurid detail. The author, who may have been Haspel herself, gloats:

“Security team backed the hooded and shackled subject against the walling panel with the towel/neck restraint over his shoulders. [High-value target interrogator] [redacted] and linguist [redacted] strode, catlike, into the well-lit confines of the cell at 0902 hrs [redacted], deftly removed the subject’s black hood with a swipe, paused, and in a deep, measured voice said that subject—having ‘calmed down’ after his (staged) run-in with his hulking, heavily muscled guards the previous day—should reveal what subject had done to vex his guards to the point of rage.”

Haspel, 61, joined the CIA in 1985. Among the positions she has held in the agency are chief of station in several world capitals, senior manager of the Counterterrorism Center and, under the Obama administration, acting deputy director of the National Clandestine Service (NCS), which carries out covert operations around the globe.



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