

# CIA and Pentagon Officials Knew Their Interrogation Methods were Torture

By [Sherwood Ross](#)

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The CIA and Pentagon used “enhanced interrogation techniques”(EIT) on Middle East prisoners knowing they were illegal and considered to be torture by the United Nations, according to an article published in the January issue of the American magazine “*Science*.”

Tortures including sensory deprivation, forced nudity, and painful body positions were “routinely applied to detainees in U.S. custody in at least three theaters of operation and an unknown number of (CIA) ‘black sites,’” the article states. The U.S. did this “despite the fact that each EIT was considered torture by the United Nations and the United States (had) recognized them as such in its reports on human rights practices.”

Entitled, “Bad Science Used to Support Torture and Human Experimentation,” the “*Science*” article was written by physicians Vincent Iacopino, Scott Allen, and Allen S. Keller. Dr. Iacopino is a professor of medicine at the University of Minnesota School of Medicine; Dr. Keller is director of the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture; and Dr. Scott Allen, associate professor of medicine and co-director of the Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights at Alpert Medical School, Brown University. All three are consultants to Physicians for Human Rights, of Cambridge, Mass.

Dr. Keller has long treated torture victims and in earlier testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence elaborated on the extensive use of enhanced interrogation techniques(EITs) as follows: “While the full spectrum of such techniques used by U.S. authorities including the Central Intelligence Agency has not been disclosed, there have been reports that the ‘enhanced’ interrogation program includes methods such as stress positions, shaking and beating, temperature manipulation, threats of harm to person or loved ones, prolonged isolation, sleep deprivation, sensory overload, sensory deprivation, sexual humiliation, exploitation of fears and phobias, cultural or religious humiliation, and water-boarding. From a medical, scientific and health perspective, there is nothing benign about them. Such techniques are gruesome, dehumanizing and dangerous.”

EITs were authorized by the CIA in Jan., 2003, and by the Pentagon two months later. Jay Bybee, an Assistant Attorney General in the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel, in an official memo, revised the definition of torture to allow for the above-cited cruelties and stated further that any interrogator who inflicted them was blameless unless it was his “specific intent” to torture. Bybee’s definition of “specific intent,” the physicians write, “undermined any meaningful definition of torture for medical personnel charged with recognizing it.”

The article blasted health professionals charged with ensuring detainees’ safety but who

were instead “calibrating the harm” inflicted upon them. Also, there is evidence in official detainee medical records that medical doctors and mental health personnel assigned to the DOD (Defense Department) “neglected and/or concealed medical evidence of intentional harm.”

“Any scientist or clinician should know that intentional infliction of harm without consent of and/or direct benefit to the individual cannot be construed as ‘ensuring safety’ and that complicity in torture and ill treatment, including by military personnel, can never be justified,” the “*Science*” article said.

The physicians say the science used to justify the torture did not assess its long-term physical and mental impact. Example: a memo by (Jay) Bybee “explicitly referred to long-term impacts, and thus appears to have been inappropriately used to justify a predetermined conclusion that torture could be safe, legal, and effective.”

Among their many recommendations, the doctors called for requiring military medical personnel to comply “with all civilian medical ethics standards;” for requiring them to be independent “from the security chain of command;” and for making them comply with the Nuremberg Code, the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations Convention Against Torture. As for those who transgress, the physicians recommend “Punitive sanctions in accordance with the law.”

The doctors also said that a health professional who becomes aware of abusive or coercive practices has a duty to report such practices to appropriate authorities. The American Psychological Association has specifically banned its members from participation in the tactics that allegedly make up the CIA’s “enhanced” interrogation program.

**Sherwood Ross** is a public relations consultant for good causes and columnist residing in south Florida. He formerly reported for the *Chicago Daily News*, has contributed extensively to wire services, and worked in a professional capacity in the civil rights movement. Reach him at [sherwoodross10@gmail.com](mailto:sherwoodross10@gmail.com)

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