

CIA renditions began under Clinton: agent

By [Global Research](#)

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The US Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) controversial "rendition" program was launched under US president Bill Clinton, a former US counter-terrorism agent has told a German newspaper.

Michael Scheuer, a 22-year veteran of the CIA who resigned from the agency in 2004, has told Die Zeit that the US administration had been looking in the mid-1990s for a way to combat the terrorist threat and circumvent the cumbersome US legal system.

"President Clinton, his national security adviser Sandy Berger and his terrorism adviser Richard Clark ordered the CIA in the autumn of 1995 to destroy Al Qaeda," Mr Scheuer said.

"We asked the president what we should do with the people we capture. Clinton said 'That's up to you'."

Mr Scheuer, who headed the CIA unit that tracked Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden from 1996 to 1999, says he developed and led the "renditions" program.

He says the program includes moving prisoners without due legal process to countries without strict human rights protections.

"In Cairo, people are not treated like they are in Milwaukee," he said.

"The Clinton administration asked us if we believed that the prisoners were being treated in accordance with local law.

"And we answered, 'yes, we're fairly sure'."

He says at the time the CIA did not arrest or imprison anyone itself.

"That was done by the local police or secret services," he said, adding the prisoners were never taken to US soil.

"President Clinton did not want that," he said.

Bush changes

He says the program changed under Mr Clinton's successor, President George W Bush, after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

"We started putting people in our own institutions - in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo," he said.

“The Bush administration wanted to capture people itself but made the same mistake as the Clinton administration by not treating these people as prisoners of war.”

He accused Europeans of being hypocritical in criticising the US administration for its anti-terrorism tactics while benefiting from them.

“All the information we received from interrogations and documents, everything that had to do with Spain, Italy, Germany, France, England was passed on,” he said.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice defended renditions on a trip to Europe this month as a “vital tool” for fighting international terrorism but insisted that the US does not condone torture.

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For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca