

FBI Compiled “War Crimes” Dossier on Prisoner Abuse and Torture

By [Tom Burghardt](#)

Global Research, May 29, 2008

[Antifascist Calling...](#) 29 May 2008

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

According to an explosive 437-page [report](#) released Monday by the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG), FBI agents assigned to the U.S. prison camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, compiled what they dubbed a “war crimes” file documenting prisoner abuse and torture by U.S. military and intelligence personnel.

The OIG report on the role of the FBI in observing or participating in prisoner abuse was compiled from a survey of several hundred field level agents and supervisors. FBI protests over these practices traveled up the chain of command and reached the White House—where they were ignored.

Documenting the widespread abuse and torture of detainees by CIA, Pentagon and “private” contractors in the employ of the U.S. Government, the file was initiated in 2002, but was ordered shut down by high level officials at the Bureau and the White House. FBI agents were ordered to stop keeping records of the criminal acts they had witnessed, *The New York Times* [reports](#).

According to Eric Lichtblau and Scott Shane,

The report says that the F.B.I. agents took their concerns to higher-ups, but that their concerns often fell on deaf ears: officials at senior levels at the F.B.I., the Justice Department, the Defense Department and the National Security Council were all made aware of the F.B.I. agents’ complaints, but little appears to have been done as a result. (“Report Details Dissent on Guantánamo Tactics,” *The New York Times*, May 23, 2008)

Indeed, rather than shutting down the criminal CIA/Pentagon operation at Guantánamo, these sordid practices were exported to Iraq when Camp Delta commander, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller was ordered by Pentagon officials to “Gitmoize” Abu Ghraib prison.

The ACLU had filed a FOIA request in April 2008 “demanding the release of the OIG report after media reports that the investigation had been completed for months. Today’s report confirms that the Defense Department used its classification review to delay the release of the report,” according to a [press release](#) by the civil liberties group.

Given the Inspector General’s grim documentary evidence, one can see why. Among the techniques used by military, CIA and “private” contractors employed as interrogators at Guantánamo, to which FBI agents objected, the vast majority were drawn from the CIA’s KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogations [manual](#) and Special Operations Command’s

Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape (SERE) program, “reversed-engineered” by Ft. Bragg SERE instructors and CIA-linked [psychologists](#).

These techniques included: prolonged “short-shackling” in “stress positions,” or the shackling of the hands and feet together; prolonged isolation; sleep deprivation; environmental “adjustment”-forced confinement in freezing or overheated cells for extended periods; sensory disorientation—either through use of strobe lights, loud music, forced drugging—or a combination of all of the above; humiliation; sexual assault, including forced nudity and touching; attacks on cultural and religious belief systems; the use of dogs to terrorize detainees; threats against family members; threats of execution; on and on.

The OIG report cites multiple cases of prisoners being beaten by interrogators and of four agents who had documented the kicking and beating to death of two prisoners in Afghanistan after their prolonged shackling in a standing position.

As I wrote in [April](#),

Debriefing files from the military’s Criminal Investigation Division (CID), obtained as a result of a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the Department of Defense, confirmed that Special Operations officers in Gardez admitted to using “reverse-engineered” Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) techniques on detainees. (“Documents Reveal ‘Reverse-Engineered’ SERE Tactics Used in Afghanistan,” Antifascist Calling..., April 22, 2008)

The OIG report now confirms that these abominable interrogation tactics were not only responsible for the cruel deaths of Afghan detainees, but had been reported to Washington by FBI field agents who observed the state-sanctioned murder of these prisoners.

That the FBI, a domestic arm of the national security state with a long, well-documented history of [political repression](#), would use the term “war crimes” in its description of Bush regime policies, is a stunning corroboration of charges leveled against the administration since the inception of the so-called “war on terror.”

Although Inspector General Glenn Fine ignores the critical issue of command responsibility, the report, nevertheless, makes it crystal clear that these weren’t aberrational acts initiated by a “few bad apples” but rather, *state policy* that emanated from the highest levels of the government—the White House, the National Security Council, the Pentagon, and indeed, from the Justice Department itself.

Readers will recall that last month ABC News [revealed](#) that top administration officials on the White House Principals’ Committee—Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, CIA Director George Tenet, Attorney General John Ashcroft and National Security Council Adviser Condoleezza Rice—held high level discussions on the efficacy of “enhanced interrogation techniques,” which “were almost choreographed—down to the number of times CIA agents could use a specific tactic.”

President Bush subsequently informed [ABC](#) that he was “aware our national security team met on this issue. And I approved.”

As do his underlings. In the wake of the Inspector General’s report, official reaction from

agencies directly implicated in Guantánamo war crimes were revelatory of the general atmosphere of impunity that rules Washington.

According to Pentagon spokesperson Bryan Whitman, “there’s nothing new here...The department has been operating for a number of years now with new and improved guidance with respect to detention operations and interrogation procedures.”

And Sean McCormack, a spokesperson for Secretary of State Rice told [The Washington Post](#) “the assertions in the report were ‘pretty vague’.”

Meanwhile Rice, implicated by these explosive charges against the administration, defended the U.S. torture policy by evoking, what else, 9/11. According to the [Associated Press](#), Rice said at a “town hall meeting” sponsored by Google, Inc.:

“The fact is that after Sept. 11, whatever was legal in the face of not just the attacks of Sept. 11, but the anthrax attacks that happened, we were in an environment in which saving America from the next attack was paramount.”

Rice went on to claim,

“But even in that environment, President Bush made clear that we were going to live up to our obligations at home and to our treaty obligations abroad. ... “Now, there has been a long evolution in American policy about detainees and about interrogations,” she said. “We now have in place a law that was not there in 2002 and 2003. So the ground is different now.” (Matthew Lee, “Rice Defends Post 9/11 Interrogation Techniques,” Associated Press, May 22, 2008)

In other words, “there’s nothing to see here, move along!” But as Bill Van Auken [writes](#),

The inmates held at Guantánamo represent barely 1 percent of those detained at US prison camps and secret jails run by the military and the CIA in Iraq, Afghanistan and other points around the world. An estimated 27,000 people are being held without charges, much less trials, many of them simply having disappeared into Washington’s global gulag. Some are held on prison ships, others in secret dungeons run jointly by the CIA and regimes to which it “outsources” detainees, like Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, where other, cruder forms of torture—being buried alive, given electric shocks or slashed with scalpels—are employed. (“FBI files indict Bush, Cheney and Co. as war criminals,” World Socialist Web Site, May 23, 2008)

Despite these damning revelations, the Democratic-controlled Congress, America’s ersatz “opposition,” sits quietly with its hands folded since after all, “impeachment is off the table,” as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) ignominiously declared shortly after the 2006 mid-term elections.

We should be clear: the Democratic leadership has neither the desire, nor the intention, of bringing the Bush regime to ground by constituting a war crimes tribunal that would punish these malefactors, the “skinheads in nice suits,” to borrow Günter Grass’ apt description of the blood-soaked gang in Washington.

The Democrats, as with their Republican colleagues across the aisle, haven’t the slightest

interest in pursuing the administration on the question of torture because *they themselves* are complicit with Bushist “high crimes and misdemeanors.”

At every turn, the Democratic leadership were briefed extensively on the criminal methods employed at Guantánamo—indeed across the entire U.S. network of secret prisons—all of which they approved and then concealed from the American people under cover of “national security” and “fighting the war against terror.”

From their shameless 2002 capitulation to the Bush gang when they gave their consent to a preemptive war of conquest against Iraq, a “war of choice” that resulted in the wanton slaughter of one million Iraqis, the Democrats have fully endorsed the U.S. policy of militarism and global aggression.

As the crisis engulfing the American capitalist system deepens, profound social polarization and widespread revulsion over the Iraq adventure may very lead to the creation of political conditions antithetical to the ruling class.

In this context, a highly-militarized corporate elite contemptuous of democratic norms and processes may be tempted to employ similar repressive methods—illegal detention, forced “disappearances” and torture—against their domestic opponents.

History, always a stern taskmistress, is replete with grim examples.

Tom Burghardt is a researcher and activist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to publishing in Covert Action Quarterly, Love & Rage and Antifa Forum, he is the editor of Police State America: U.S. Military “Civil Disturbance” Planning, distributed by [AK Press](#).

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