

U.S. Participating in Torture Again ... Because We Didn't Learn Any Lessons from Iraq

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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We've pointed out for years that failing to prosecute torturers would [ensure that the U.S. tortures again in the future](#).

Unfortunately, no one was prosecuted (except [the guy who blew the whistle](#) on torture; and the Department of Justice [refused to even read](#) the Senate's report on torture), so now we're involved in torture again. The Associated Press [reports](#):

Hundreds of men swept up in the hunt for al-Qaida militants have disappeared into a secret network of prisons in southern Yemen where abuse is routine and torture extreme — including the “grill,” in which the victim is tied to a spit like a roast and spun in a circle of fire, an Associated Press investigation has found.

Several U.S. defense officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the topic, told AP that American forces do participate in interrogations of detainees at locations in Yemen, provide questions for others to ask, and receive transcripts of interrogations from Emirati allies. They said U.S. senior military leaders were aware of allegations of torture at the prisons in Yemen

None of the dozens of people interviewed by AP contended that American interrogators were involved in the actual abuses. Nevertheless, obtaining intelligence that may have been extracted by torture inflicted by another party would violate the International Convention Against Torture and could qualify as war crimes, said Ryan Goodman, a law professor at New York University who served as special counsel to the Defense Department until last year.

The network of prisons echoes the secret detention facilities set up by the CIA to interrogate terrorism suspects in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. In 2009, then-President Barack Obama disbanded the so-called “black sites.” The UAE network in war-torn Yemen was set up during the Obama administration and continues operating to this day.

“The UAE was one of the countries involved in the CIA’s torture and rendition program,” said Goodman, the NYU law professor. “These reports are hauntingly familiar and potentially devastating in their legal and policy implications.”

This is hauntingly familiar, indeed ...

According to [NBC News](#):

- Much of the 9/11 Commission Report was based upon the testimony of people who were tortured
- At least four of the people whose interrogation figured in the 9/11 Commission Report have claimed that they told interrogators information as a way to stop being “tortured.”
- One of the Commission’s main sources of information was tortured until he agreed to sign a confession that he was not even allowed to read
- The 9/11 Commission itself *doubted the accuracy of the torture confessions*, and yet kept their doubts to themselves

In fact, the 9/11 Commission Report was largely based on *third-hand accounts* of what tortured detainees said, with two of the three parties in the communication being government employees.

As the 9/11 Commission Report itself [states](#):

Chapters 5 and 7 rely heavily on information obtained from captured al Qaeda members. A number of these “detainees” have firsthand knowledge of the 9/11 plot. Assessing the truth of statements by these witnesses-sworn enemies of the United States-is challenging. Our access to them has been limited to the review of intelligence reports based on communications received from the locations where the actual interrogations take place. We submitted questions for use in the interrogations, but had no control over whether, when, or how questions of particular interest would be asked. Nor were we allowed to talk to the interrogators so that we could better judge the credibility of the detainees and clarify ambiguities in the reporting.

In other words, the 9/11 Commissioners were not allowed to speak with the detainees, or even their interrogators. Instead, they got their information third-hand.

The Commission didn’t really trust the interrogation testimony. For example, one of the primary architects of the 9/11 Commission Report – Ernest May – [said](#) in May 2005:

We never had full confidence in the interrogation reports as historical sources.

End Notes

1. The U.S. is committing [other war crimes](#) in Yemen, as well.
2. All of the top interrogation experts agree that [torture does not produce useful information](#).
3. It’s not just torture. Failure to punish any type of crime encourages more of that type of crime. For example, we’ve known for [hundreds of years](#) that [failure to punish](#) financial fraud ensures that banksters will carry out bigger and bigger frauds on the country, since [fraud goes up as prosecutions go down](#).

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