

# US Media Ignores CIA Cover-up on Torture. How the CIA Tried to Block the U.S. Senate's Torture Investigation

MEMORANDUM FOR: Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Vice Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

By [Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity](#)

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*A group of U.S. intelligence veterans chastises the mainstream U.S. media for virtually ignoring a British newspaper's account of the gripping inside story on how the CIA tried to block the U.S. Senate's torture investigation.*

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Vice Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

**FROM:** Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity

**SUBJECT:** U.S. Media Mum On How Your Committee Faced Down Both CIA and Obama

We write to thank you for your unwavering support for your extraordinarily courageous and tenacious staff in (1) investigating CIA torture under the Bush/Cheney administration and (2) resisting CIA/White House attempts under the Obama administration to cover up heinous torture crimes like waterboarding.



The CIA seal in the lobby of CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

We confess to having been shocked at the torture detailed in the version of the [executive summary](#) your Committee released on December 9, 2014. We found ourselves wondering

what additional behavior could have been deemed so repugnant that the White House and CIA insisted it be redacted; and if the entire 6,700-page investigation - with whatever redaction might be truly necessary - would ever see the light of day. We think you could take steps now to make it less likely that the full report be deep-sixed, and we will make some suggestions below toward that end.

With well over 400 years of intelligence experience under our collective belt, we wondered how you managed to get the investigation finished and the executive summary up and out (though redacted). We now know the backstory - thanks to the unstinting courage of the committee's principal investigator Daniel Jones, who has been interviewed by [Spencer Ackerman](#), an investigative reporter for The (UK) Guardian newspaper. The titanic struggle depicted by Ackerman reads like a crime novel; sadly, the four-part series is nonfiction:

I. "[Senate investigator breaks silence about CIA's 'failed coverup' of torture report](#)"

II. "[Inside the fight to reveal the CIA's torture secrets](#)"

III. " ['A constitutional crisis': the CIA turns on the Senate](#)"

IV. "[No looking back: the CIA torture report's aftermath](#)"

Ackerman's reporting on Jones's tenacity in facing down the gorilla CIA makes abundantly clear how richly deserved was the [encomium you gave Jones](#) when he left the committee staff in December 2015.

You noted, "Without his indefatigable work on the Intelligence Committee staff, the Senate report on the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program would not have been completed, nor would its 525-page executive summary have been released to the public."

It seems equal praise might well be due to any Snowden-like patriot/whistleblower who "inadvertently" included the "Panetta Review" in the reams of material given your committee by the CIA.

Remarkably, a full week after *The Guardian* carried Ackerman's revelations, none has been picked up by U.S. "mainstream" newspapers. Not the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post* - not even *The Hill*.

(As for alternative media, [Charles P. Pierce's timely piece](#) for *Esquire* whetted his readers' appetite for the gripping detail of the *Guardian* series, explaining that it would be "unfair both to Ackerman's diligence and Jones's courage" to try to summarize even just the first installment. "Read the whole damn thing," Pierce advises.)



Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-California.

And so, the culprits who should be hanging their heads in shame are out and about, with some still collecting book royalties and some blithely working for this or that candidate for president. As if nothing happened. Sadly, given the soporific state of our mainstream media – particularly on sensitive issues like these – their silence is nothing new, although it does seem to have gotten even worse in recent years.

The late William Colby, CIA director from 1973 to 1976, has been quoted as saying: “The CIA owns everyone of any significance in the major media.” Whether or not Colby was quoted correctly, the experience of the past several decades suggests it is largely true. Better sourced is a quote from William Casey, CIA director from 1981 to 1987: “We’ll know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false.”

In these circumstances, we know from sad experience that there is no way any of us can get on any of the Sunday talk shows, for example – despite our [enviable record](#) for getting it right. Nor does it seem likely that any of the “mainstream” media will invite you to discuss the highly instructive revelations in The Guardian. We respectfully suggest that you take the initiative to obtain media exposure for this very important story.

One additional request: As you and your investigators know better than anyone, it is essential to safeguard the integrity not only of the unredacted executive summary but also of the entire 6,700-page committee report on the CIA’s Detention and Interrogation Program.

And, again, you are aware that as soon as Sen. Richard Burr, R-North Carolina, took the gavel from you, he took steps seemingly aimed at ensuring that the full report never sees the light of day. Could you ask him why, as soon as he became chair, he asked the executive branch to transfer their copies to the Senate Intelligence Committee?

Many interpreted that as an ill-disguised attempt to thwart holding accountable those responsible for the abuses. Moreover, if the report cannot be reviewed by those who might be asked to participate in activities like torture in the future, how is it even possible for anyone to learn from the prior unfortunate experience?

The public is entitled to the entire story about the CIA torture program and its lies to Congress, the White House, and to us. Any attempt to bury the fullest investigation of the torture program – an investigation that provides an example of Congressional oversight at its best – would undermine the democratic accountability that is supposed to be provided by

the separation of powers.

Furthermore, as you were quoted in the Guardian series, the agency searches “may have undermined the constitutional framework essential to effective congressional oversight of intelligence activities or any other government function . . .”

Senator Jay Rockefeller, D-West Virginia, was exactly on point: “You either have oversight and separation of powers with the checks and balances that come with that, or you don’t. It’s amazing that, once again, no one at the CIA was held accountable.” Consequently, the issue now is not only the cover-up of torture by the CIA but – at least equally important – the “unbridled agency that spied on Americans (including Senate Intelligence Committee staffers) as eagerly as they spied on foreign adversaries,” as the Guardian described it in referring to the Church Committee investigation in the 1970s.

Does American democracy deserve any less than an intense investigation of the CIA’s obstruction of the democratic process in the 2000s?

*The Guardian* revelations make it still more difficult for the kind of excuses made by those who can hardly pretend to be disinterested observers – former CIA directors George Tenet, Porter Goss, Michael Hayden, for example – who wrote *Rebuttal: The CIA Responds to the Senate Intelligence Committee’s Study of Its Detention and Interrogation Program*, published on September 9, 2015. We published our own [\(VIPS\) critique of “Rebuttal”](#) five days later. And before the final vote on John Brennan’s nomination to become CIA director, [we tried to warn you](#) not to trust him.



President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney receive an Oval Office briefing from CIA Director George Tenet. Also present is Chief of Staff Andy Card (on right). (White House photo)

We believe you will agree that more needs to be done to replant the moral moorings of honesty that must anchor the intelligence profession to which we have given so many years. And we think that one step in that direction would be for you to seize this new opportunity to give prominence to the edifying story of how your committee and its staffers stepped up so effectively to their responsibilities in investigating and exposing the very sad and delicate chapter of CIA torture.

The play-by-play provided by the *Guardian* series, with its appropriate focus on the top investigator Daniel Jones, has created an opportunity we hope will not be squandered; a chance to tell a truly uplifting story sure to encourage others to behave in similarly exemplary manner.

## ***For the Steering Group, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)***

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