



For Immediate Release
December 9, 2014

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Senate Intelligence Committee Releases Report on CIA Detention, Interrogation Program

Washington—Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today released the executive summary of the committee’s five-year review of the CIA’s detention and interrogation program. The release includes redacted versions of the committee’s executive summary and findings and conclusions, as well as additional and minority views authored by members of the committee.

“This document examines the CIA’s secret overseas detention of at least 119 individuals and the use of coercive interrogation techniques—in some cases amounting to torture,” Feinstein said.

The executive summary and additional information is available on [Senator Feinstein’s website](#).

Study process

The committee voted to initiate the review on March 5, 2009, with a bipartisan 14-1 vote. Over the following three and a half years, committee staff reviewed more than 6.3 million pages of CIA records, a painstaking process that culminated in the committee’s 9-6 bipartisan vote to approve the study on December 13, 2012.

Months of meetings with the CIA and work to update the study followed, and on April 3, 2014, the committee voted 11-3 to declassify and release the committee’s report. The committee has worked with the Executive Branch over the past eight months to prepare a redacted version designed to protect national security while allowing for the public release of this information.

Key findings

The study’s 20 findings and conclusions can be grouped into four central themes, each of which is supported extensively in the Executive Summary:

1. The CIA's "enhanced interrogation techniques" were not effective.
2. The CIA provided extensive inaccurate information about the operation of the program and its effectiveness to policymakers and the public.
3. The CIA's management of the program was inadequate and deeply flawed.
4. The CIA program was far more brutal than the CIA represented to policymakers and the American public.

1. The CIA's coercive interrogation techniques were not effective.

- At no time did the CIA's coercive interrogation techniques lead to the collection of imminent threat intelligence, such as the hypothetical "ticking time bomb" information that many believe was the justification for the use of these techniques.
- The committee reviewed 20 of the most frequent and prominent examples of purported counterterrorism "successes" that the CIA has attributed to the use of its enhanced interrogation techniques. Each of those examples was found to be wrong in fundamental respects. In some cases, there was no relationship between the claimed counterterrorism "success" and any information provided by a CIA detainee during or after the use of the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques. In the remaining cases, the CIA inaccurately represented that unique information was acquired from a CIA detainee as a result of the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques, when in fact the information was either (a) acquired from the CIA detainee prior to the use of the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques or (b) corroborative of information already available to the intelligence community from sources other than the CIA detainee, and therefore not unique or "otherwise unavailable," which was the standard for effectiveness the CIA presented to the Department of Justice and policymakers.
- The methods in question—which were based on discredited coercive interrogation techniques such as those used by torturous regimes during the Cold War to elicit false confessions—regularly resulted in fabricated information. During the brutal interrogations the CIA was often unaware the information was fabricated, leading CIA officers or contractors to falsely conclude that they were acquiring unique or actionable intelligence when they were not.
- Internally, CIA officers regularly called into question the effectiveness of the CIA's interrogation techniques, noting how the techniques failed to elicit detainee cooperation or produce accurate intelligence.
- The CIA acknowledges that it never adequately reviewed the effectiveness of its enhanced interrogation techniques, despite a recommendation by the CIA inspector general to do so and similar requests by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and the leadership of the Senate Intelligence Committee. After the use of the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques failed to elicit information on the last detainee in CIA custody in 2007, a CIA review team internally

concluded that future CIA interrogations should incorporate more rapport-building techniques and that the CIA should conduct research on interrogation techniques used by other U.S. government agencies.

2. The CIA provided extensive inaccurate information about the operation of the program and its effectiveness to policymakers and the public.

- The study details how the CIA used inaccurate information to obtain legal and policy approval to use the CIA's "enhanced interrogation techniques." The CIA provided inaccurate information to the White House, Congress, the Justice Department, the CIA inspector general, the media, and the American public.
- The CIA said the use of enhanced interrogation techniques was necessary to obtain unique intelligence and that the intelligence acquired was "otherwise unavailable" to the nation. The CIA further represented that intelligence from these techniques "saved lives" and loss of the authority to use the interrogation techniques would result in the deaths of Americans.
- In an attempt to justify the use of the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques, the CIA provided examples of supposedly "thwarted" terrorist plots and the capture of specific terrorists that the CIA attributed to the use of its techniques. The CIA representations were inaccurate and contradicted by the CIA's own records. The CIA's internal Panetta Review also identified numerous inaccuracies in the CIA's effectiveness representations—including representations to the President.
- The full membership of the Senate Intelligence Committee was not briefed on the techniques until hours before the detention and interrogation program was publicly disclosed by President Bush in a speech on September 6, 2006. Briefings to the full committee contained numerous inaccuracies, including inaccurate descriptions of how interrogation techniques were applied and what information was produced from the program.
- After they were briefed, several senators objected to the program. Senator McCain informed the CIA that he believed waterboarding and sleep deprivation were torture, and other senators including Feinstein, Hagel, Wyden, and Feingold expressed concerns in writing. Nonetheless, the CIA informed the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel in classified settings that no senators had objected to the enhanced interrogation techniques that the CIA then sought to use against detainees.
- The CIA provided incomplete and inaccurate information to the White House regarding the operation and effectiveness of the detention and interrogation program. In addition to inaccurate statements provided to other policymakers, there were instances in which specific questions from White House officials were not answered truthfully or completely.

3. The CIA's management of the program was inadequate and deeply flawed.

- The CIA was unprepared to operate and manage the program more than six months after being granted covert detention authorities by President Bush, which included no reference to interrogations or coercive interrogation techniques.
- The CIA failed to review its previous use of coercive interrogations decades earlier, which resulted in the conclusion, as stated to Congress in 1989, that “inhumane physical or psychological techniques are counterproductive because they do not produce intelligence and will probably result in false answers.” The CIA also did not contact other parts of the U.S. government with interrogation expertise.
- One clear example of flawed CIA management was the poorly-managed second detention facility, which began operations in September 2002. This facility is referred to as “COBALT,” a fictitious name created just for the report. The facility kept few formal records of detainees housed there and untrained CIA officers conducted frequent, unauthorized, unsupervised interrogations using techniques that were not—and never became—part of the CIA’s formal interrogation program.
- The CIA placed a junior officer with no relevant experience in charge of COBALT. In November 2002 a detainee who had been held partially nude and chained to a concrete floor died from suspected hypothermia at the facility. In interviews conducted in 2003 by the Office of the Inspector General, CIA’s leadership acknowledged that they had little or no awareness of operations at COBALT, and some believed that the CIA’s enhanced interrogation techniques were not used there.
- The CIA did not employ adequately trained and vetted personnel. The CIA deployed individuals without relevant training or experience. CIA also deployed officers who had documented personal and professional problems of a serious nature—including histories of violence and abusive treatment of others—that should have called into question their employment, let alone their suitability to participate in the sensitive CIA program.
- The CIA used two outside contract psychologists to develop, operate, and assess its interrogation operations. The psychologists’ prior experience was at the Air Force Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) school. Neither psychologist had any experience as an interrogator, nor did either have specialized knowledge of al-Qaeda, a background in counterterrorism, or any relevant cultural or linguistic expertise.
 - The contractors developed the list of enhanced interrogation techniques and personally conducted interrogations of some of the CIA’s most significant

detainees using those techniques. The contractors also evaluated whether detainees' psychological state allowed for the continued use of the techniques, even for some detainees they themselves were interrogating or had interrogated.

- The contract psychologists also served as liaisons between the CIA and foreign intelligence services, and the CIA allowed them to assess the effectiveness of their own interrogation program. In 2005, the psychologists formed a company to expand their work with the CIA. Shortly thereafter, the CIA outsourced virtually all aspects of the program. The CIA paid the company more than \$80 million.
- Of the 119 known detainees that were in CIA custody during the life of the program, at least 26 were wrongfully held. Detainees often remained in custody for months after the CIA determined they should not have been detained. CIA records provide insufficient information to justify the detention of many other detainees. Due to poor CIA record keeping, a full accounting of how many specific CIA detainees were held and how they were specifically treated while in custody may never be known.
- On two occasions, when specific allegations were made against CIA employees associated with the program, attempts to hold individuals accountable were overruled. In 2005, an accountability board recommendation to hold an individual accountable was overruled by senior CIA leadership. In a second case in 2007, the CIA director intervened before an accountability board was even convened.

4. The CIA program was far more brutal than the CIA represented to policymakers and the American public.

- Beginning with the CIA's first detainee, Abu Zubaydah, and continuing with numerous others, the CIA applied its so-called enhanced interrogation techniques in near non-stop fashion for days or weeks at a time.
- Records do not support CIA representations that the CIA initially used an "an open, non-threatening approach," or that interrogations began with the "least coercive technique possible" and escalated to more coercive techniques only as necessary. Instead, in many cases the most aggressive techniques were used immediately, in combination and nonstop. Sleep deprivation involved keeping detainees awake for up to 180 hours, usually standing or in painful stress positions, at times with their hands shackled above their heads. The CIA led several detainees to believe they would never be allowed to leave CIA custody alive, suggesting to one detainee that he would only leave in a coffin-shaped box.
- The CIA represented that its interrogations were nothing like what was depicted in the Abu Ghraib photographs and testified to senators that the CIA's interrogation techniques were similar to "transparent law enforcement procedures

[that] had developed to such a high level...that you could get pretty much what you wanted.” This was not accurate. CIA detainees at one detention facility, described as a “dungeon,” were kept in complete darkness and constantly shackled in isolated cells with loud noise or music and only a bucket to use for human waste.

- Lack of heat at the facility likely contributed to the death of a detainee. At times, detainees there were walked around naked and shackled with their hands above their head. At other times, naked detainees were hooded and dragged up and down corridors while being slapped and punched.
- Throughout the program, multiple CIA detainees who were subjected to the CIA’s techniques and extended isolation exhibited psychological and behavioral issues, including hallucinations, paranoia, insomnia, and attempts at self-harm and self-mutilation. Multiple psychologists identified the lack of human contact experienced by detainees as a cause of psychological problems.
- Contrary to CIA representations to the Department of Justice, the waterboarding technique was physically harmful, inducing convulsions and vomiting. During one session, Abu Zubaydah became “completely unresponsive with bubbles rising through his open full mouth.” Internal CIA records describe the waterboarding of Khalid Shaykh Mohammad as evolving into a “series of near drownings.” There are records to indicate that the CIA may have used the waterboard technique on more than the three detainees the CIA had previously identified. For example, the committee uncovered a photograph of a waterboard with buckets of water around it at a detention site where the CIA has claimed it never subjected a detainee to the waterboard. In meetings with the CIA in 2013, CIA was unable to explain the presence of the well-worn waterboard at the CIA detention site.
- Contrary to CIA representations to the Department of Justice, the CIA instructed personnel that the interrogation of Abu Zubaydah would take “precedence” over his medical care, resulting in the infection and deterioration of a bullet wound Abu Zubaydah incurred during his capture. At least five CIA detainees were subjected to “rectal feeding” or “rectal hydration” without documented medical need.

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