What’s at stake: “if the United States is to come to terms with its involvement in institutionalized state torture, there must be a full and official accounting of what has been done, and those responsible at the highest levels must be held accountable.” Rebecca Gordon

OMNI NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS PROJECT:
JUNE IS UN TORTURE AWARENESS MONTH
JUNE 26 IS UN INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE
JULY 17 IS UN INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE DAY, INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

OMNI EVENTS
UN TORTURE AWARENESS MONTH, June 22, 2013: us TORTURE and MURDER PROTEST AT FEDERAL BLDNG, FAYETTEVILLE.
UN INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE, JUNE 26, Film at OMNI, War on Whistleblowers
UN International Justice Day, July 17, Book Forum
My blog: War Department/Peace Department

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
www.faypublic.tv/watch

My Newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

See Atrocities, Bush, Cheney, Civil Liberties, Constitution, Genocide, International Law, Lawlessness, Militarism, Murder, NDAA newsletters, Obama, Rice (Condoleezza).

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Jane Mayer, The Dark Side)

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By Jon Wiener, The Nation blog, posted December 15, 2014

Additional Background to Invasion, Occupation, Torture
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Z Magazine, US, Torture, and Latin America
Historians Against the War (HAW)
Knowledge of the full, including worst reality strengthens the search for the best.

Mainstreaming Torture: Ethical Approaches in the Post-9/11 United States By Rebecca Gordon. OUP USA. 22 May 2014. 240 pages

Explains and offers new insight into the concept of institutionalized state torture.

Explores how Americans have been conditioned to react to threats of terrorism, real and imagined.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 reopened what many people in America had long assumed was a settled ethical question: Is torture ever morally permissible? Within days, some began to suggest that, in these new circumstances, the new answer was yes. Rebecca Gordon argues that September 11 did not, as some have said, change everything, and that institutionalized state torture remains as wrong today as it was on the day before those terrible attacks. Furthermore, U.S. practices during the war on terror are rooted in a history that began long before September 11, a history that includes both support for torture regimes abroad and the use of torture in American jails and prisons. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 reopened what Gordon argues that the most common ethical approaches to torture: utilitarianism and deontology (ethics based on adherence to duty) do not provide sufficient theoretical purchase on the problem. Both approaches treat torture as a series of isolated actions that arise in moments of extremity, rather than as an ongoing, historically and socially embedded practice. She advocates instead a virtue ethics approach, based in part on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre. Such an approach better illumines torture’s ethical dimensions, taking into account the implications of torture for human virtue and flourishing. An examination of torture’s effect on the four cardinal virtues: courage, temperance, justice, and prudence (or
practical reason) suggests specific ways in which each of these are deformed in a society that countenances torture many people in America had long assumed was a settled. *Mainstreaming Torture* concludes with the observation that if the United States is to come to terms with its involvement in institutionalized state torture, there must be a full and official accounting of what has been done, and those responsible at the highest levels must be held accountable.

**SENATE’S TORTURE REPORT** (via Historians Against the War, HAW)

"*How to Read the Senate Report on CIA Torture*"

By Alfred W. McCoy, History News Network, posted December 21

*The author teaches history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has written two books on US torture policy.*

"*Could Torture Report Be First Step to Ending U.S. War Crimes?*"

By Nicolas J. S. Davies, Huffington Post, posted December 17

*The author wrote Blood on Our Hands: The American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq.*

**PROSECUTE CHENEY AND BUSH**

*Democracy Now! Dec. 23, 2014*

**Bush & Cheney Should Be Charged with War Crimes Says Col. Wilkerson, Former Aide to Colin Powell**

Calls are increasing for the prosecution of George W. Bush administration officials tied to the CIA torture program. On Monday, the American Civil Liberties Union ...

**Ex-Bush Official: U.S. Tortured Prisoners to Produce False Intel that Built Case for Iraq War**

Since the release of Senate findings earlier this month, the assumption that the CIA’s torture program’s sole motive was post-9/11 self-defense has gone virtually ...
Samuel, Nov. 21, 2014

The Senate Intelligence Committee’s “torture report” is expected to detail shocking abuse of prisoners at the hands of the CIA during the Bush administration, and even possible CIA lies to Congress to cover it up. Unsurprisingly, the CIA is trying to prevent much of the report from seeing light of day.

**But we can help compel its release -- click here to help make it happen.**

As we understand it, the report of course covers waterboarding and other torture that's euphemistically been called "enhanced interrogation", but also makes it clear that the CIA engaged in even more grotesque, unreported acts as well. All in our names.

But seven months after the Senate Intelligence Committee voted overwhelmingly to release the report to the American people, the White House is stonewalling Congress and demanding "redactions"—blacked-out sections that make the report unintelligible—before making its contents public.

**But one courageous Senator is considering releasing the report anyway -- please click here to urge him to do so.**

We have a real chance to have the report released before the end of the year, when Senator Mark Udall leaves office.

Here’s how: Members of Congress have an absolute right to free speech, and a member could release the report in its entirety without fear of prosecution.

This is just as the Pentagon Papers, disclosing lies that underpinned our involvement in Vietnam, were released in 1971.

That’s exactly what transparency advocates are calling on the outgoing, staunchly anti-torture and pro-transparency Senator Udall to do -- and he’s made it clear that he’s actively considering doing so.

This is would be a courageous act that would incur the ire of very powerful interests -- so we need to make sure that Udall knows countless people will support him if he chooses to move forward.

**Click here to tell Mark Udall to be our hero and stand strong against torture: Please release the report before you leave office.**

We have a real chance to make history -- and hold the Bush administration and the CIA's torturers accountable. Let's get it done.

- Watchdog.net & Demand Progress

David Segal, Watchdog.net <info@watchdog.net>
30 Ritchie Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20910
The Senate Intelligence Committee’s "torture report" is expected to detail shocking abuse of prisoners at the hands of the CIA during the Bush administration, and even possible CIA lying to Congress.

But seven months after the Senate Intelligence Committee voted overwhelmingly to release the report to the American people, the White House is stonewalling Congress and demanding "redactions"—blacked-out sections and information—before making its contents public.

But there’s a way around that—and before the end of the year, we have a rare chance to make it happen.

Members of Congress have an absolute right to free speech, and a member could enter the report into the Congressional Record in its entirety—just as the Pentagon Papers were in 1971—without fear of prosecution.

That's exactly what transparency advocates are calling on outgoing, staunchly anti-torture and pro-transparency Sen. Mark Udall to do.
Our Message to Sen. Mark Udall:

Before leaving office, please submit the Senate Intelligence Committee's torture report to the Congressional Record. We know that you are considering undertaking this heroic and courageous act, and we and countless others will support you if you choose to do so.

We will deliver a copy of this petition and a list of signers to Sen. Mark Udall, Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Dianne Feinstein and President Obama to make sure our message is heard.

Bill of Rights Defense Committee

Blue America

Code Pink

CREDO

Daily Kos

Demand Progress

Digby's Hullabaloo

Fight for the Future

Just Foreign Policy

The Nation

RH Reality Check

RootsAction.org

USAction

Win Without War
Torture’s Time for Accountability: Despite a Fearful Obama
By Ray McGovern (former CIA analyst), December 20, 2014
https://consortiumnews.com/.../tortures-time-for-accountabilit...

Kathy Kelly’s Conviction & Ray McGovern’s Confrontation with former chair of House Intelligence Committee

https://www.facebook.com/sue.skidmore.7773
The United States tortures people http://www.dailykos.com/story/2014/12/14/1351217/-The-United-States-tortures-people

Dick Cheney and his media enablers undermine national security by Laurence Lewis


TORTURE USA

"How Torture Became Normalized in America"
By Rebecca Gordon, Informed Comment blog, posted April 22

Based on the author's newly published book, Mainstreaming Torture.

Karen J. Greenberg | The Road From Abu Ghraib
Karen J. Greenberg, TomDispatch, Reader Supported News, April 28, 2014
Greenberg writes: "It's mind-boggling. Torture is still up for grabs in America. No
one questions anymore whether the CIA waterboarded one individual 83 times or another 186 times."

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AT THE CENTER OF THE TORTURE, 2 Articles


The 500-page US Senate Intelligence summary of its investigation of George W. Bush’s administration’s torture program revealed health professionals’ facilitation of the program. The company two psychologists founded, for example, made $180 million. A new report from Physicians for Human Rights reveals even more involvement by health care workers: “Doing Harm: Health Professionals’ Central Role in the CIA Torture Program.”

Weaponizing Health Workers: How Medical Professionals Were a Top Instrument in U.S. Torture Program

Democracy Now! Daily Digest, Dec. 23, 2014

Physicians for Human Rights is calling for a federal commission to investigate, document and hold accountable all health professionals who took part in CIA ...

Dick Cheney's Sadistic America: Why Torture Persists Post-W

(illustration: FOX)

Rebecca Gordon, TomDispatch, Reader Supported News, 13 July 14

Gordon writes: "Once upon a time, if a character on TV or in a movie tortured someone, it was a sure sign that he was a bad guy. Now, the torturers are the all-American heroes."
Alfred Hitchcock and the art of Enhanced Interrogation
Richard S. Drake/Jan. 18. 2015
http://www.arktimes.com/blogs/streetjazz/

While watching the brilliant Hitchcock film Foreign Correspondent tonight on Turner Classic Movies, this scene came up when the Nazi villains have a man captive, and they are trying to get information out of him.

Okay, so nobody says outright that they are Nazis, but we all understand who they are, and who they work for. Maybe audiences were smarter in those days, and didn’t need someone to deliver messages with a hammer and chisel.

Digression aside, how are the Nazi devils trying to get the information they need?

Bright lights, the brightest they can find, are shone directly into their victim’s face, and band music is played at top volume relentlessly. Behind the lights, a group of grim-faced men watch the helpless prisoner as he begs for release, no pity on their faces.

Ah, torture.

No, I corrected myself - it's enhanced interrogation. After all, haven't the finest politicians, the most astute lawyers, and the lost eloquent cable commentators in our nation all declared that such practices - and other things too grotesque to mention here - are not torture, but merely interrogation of the most enhanced kind?

Sort of makes you wonder why the idea of Nazis enhancing their interrogations makes us so uncomfortable when we see it on screen. Except . . .

. . . Except that when a British reporter played by the inimitable George Sanders (who, by the way, gets all the best lines in the movie) is forced to watch as even more enhanced interrogation takes place - the looks of revulsion both on his face, and on the face of the woman who has brought him at gunpoint into the room are far more eloquent than any clumsy shots of an interrogator at work.

And the woman watching alongside George Sanders, who can barely stomach what she is seeing . . . is a Nazi.

It is a telling scene, both in the realization that our enhancers at Gitmo got their ideas from Nazis, and that even a Nazi (at least in a movie) might be repulsed by what was done in the name of her Homeland.

It is the sort of scene which makes me wonder how actual defenders of torture view the scene; are they even aware of their spiritual bond with Nazis, and do they even care?

Or do they just dismiss it with a casual, "It’s only a movie."
"Too Big to Jail: Why Kidnapping, Torture, Assassination, and Perjury Are No Longer Crimes in Washington"

By Tom Engelhardt, TomDispatch.com, posted April 21

On the erosion of accountability, except for the one crime of whistleblowing


Two of the things that governments tend to cover-up or lie about the most are assassinations and torture, both of which are widely looked upon as exceedingly immoral and unlawful, even uncivilized. Since the end of the Second World War the United States has attempted to assassinate more than 50 foreign leaders and has led the world in torture; not only the torture performed directly by Americans upon foreigners, but providing torture equipment, torture manuals, lists of people to be tortured, and in-person guidance and encouragement by American instructors, particularly in Latin America.

Thus it is somewhat to the credit of President Obama that at his August 1 press conference he declared “We did a whole lot of things that were right, but we tortured some folks. We did some things that were contrary to our values.”

And he actually used the word “torture” at that moment, not “enhanced interrogation”, which has been the euphemism of preference the past decade, although two minutes later the president used “extraordinary interrogation techniques”. And “tortured some folks” makes me wince. The man is clearly uncomfortable with the subject.

But all this is minor. Much more important is the fact that for several years Mr. Obama’s supporters have credited him with having put an end to the practice of torture. And they simply have no right to make that claim.

Shortly after Obama’s first inauguration, both he and Leon Panetta, the new Director of the CIA, explicitly stated that “rendition” was not being ended. As the Los Angeles Times reported at the time: “Under executive orders issued by Obama recently, the CIA still has authority to carry out what are known as renditions, secret abductions and transfers of prisoners to countries that cooperate with the United States.”
The English translation of “cooperate” is “torture”. Rendition is simply outsourcing torture. There was no other reason to take prisoners to Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Somalia, Kosovo, or the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, to name some of the known torture centers frequented by the United States. Kosovo and Diego Garcia – both of which house large and very secretive American military bases – if not some of the other locations, may well still be open for torture business. The same for the Guantánamo Base in Cuba.

Moreover, the Executive Order referred to, number 13491, issued January 22, 2009, “Ensuring Lawful Interrogations”, leaves a major loophole. It states repeatedly that humane treatment, including the absence of torture, is applicable only to prisoners detained in an “armed conflict”. Thus, torture by Americans outside an environment of “armed conflict” is not explicitly prohibited. But what about torture within an environment of “counter-terrorism”?

The Executive Order required the CIA to use only the interrogation methods outlined in a revised Army Field Manual. However, using the Army Field Manual as a guide to prisoner treatment and interrogation still allows solitary confinement, perceptual or sensory deprivation, sensory overload, sleep deprivation, the induction of fear and hopelessness, mind-altering drugs, environmental manipulation such as temperature and noise, and stress positions.

After Panetta was questioned by a Senate panel, the New York Times wrote that he had “left open the possibility that the agency could seek permission to use interrogation methods more aggressive than the limited menu that President Obama authorized under new rules … Mr. Panetta also said the agency would continue the Bush administration practice of ‘rendition’ – picking terrorism suspects off the street and sending them to a third country. But he said the agency would refuse to deliver a suspect into the hands of a country known for torture or other actions ‘that violate our human values’.”

The last sentence is of course childishly absurd. The countries chosen to receive rendition prisoners were chosen precisely because they were willing and able to torture them.

No official in the Bush and Obama administrations has been punished in any way for torture or other war crimes in Iraq, Afghanistan and the other countries they waged illegal war against. And, it could be added, no American bankster has been punished for their indispensable role in the world-wide financial torture they inflicted upon us all beginning in 2008. What a marvelously forgiving land is America. This, however, does not apply to Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, or Chelsea Manning.

In the last days of the Bush White House, Michael Ratner, professor at Columbia Law School and former president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, pointed out:

The only way to prevent this from happening again is to make sure that those who were responsible for the torture program pay the price for it. I don’t see how we regain our moral stature by allowing those who were intimately involved in the torture programs to simply walk
off the stage and lead lives where they are not held accountable.

I’d like at this point to once again remind my dear readers of the words of the “Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment”, which was drafted by the United Nations in 1984, came into force in 1987, and ratified by the United States in 1994. Article 2, section 2 of the Convention states: “No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.”

Such marvelously clear, unequivocal, and principled language, to set a single standard for a world that makes it increasingly difficult for one to feel proud of humanity.

The Convention Against Torture has been and remains the supreme law of the land. It is a cornerstone of international law and a principle on a par with the prohibition against slavery and genocide.

“Mr. Snowden will not be tortured. Torture is unlawful in the United States.” – United States Attorney General Eric Holder, July 26, 2013

John Brennan, appointed by President Obama in January 2013 to be Director of the CIA, has defended “rendition” as an “absolutely vital tool”; and stated that torture had produced “life saving” intelligence.

Obama had nominated Brennan for the CIA position in 2008, but there was such an outcry in the human-rights community over Brennan’s apparent acceptance of torture, that Brennan withdrew his nomination. Barack Obama evidently learned nothing from this and appointed the man again in 2013.

During Cold War One, a common theme in the rhetoric was that the Soviets tortured people and detained them without cause, extracted phony confessions, and did the unspeakable to detainees who were helpless against the full, heartless weight of the Communist state. As much as any other evil, torture differentiated the bad guys, the Commies, from the good guys, the American people and their government. However imperfect the US system might be – we were all taught – it had civilized standards that the enemy rejected.

**Senate Report: Bush Era Torture Was Unnecessary**

*Mark Hosenball, Reuters, Reader Supported News, August 2, 2014*

Hosenball writes: "A U.S. Senate committee report will conclude that the CIA's use of harsh interrogation after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks yielded no critical intelligence on terrorist plots that could not have been obtained through non-coercive methods, U.S. officials familiar with the document said."
Veterans Call for Prosecution of Those Responsible for U.S. Torture Program

Veterans For Peace praises the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence release of their Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency’s Detention and Interrogation Program. VFP calls for a full investigation and accountability of officials at the highest levels for the authorizations and execution of torture techniques by the CIA and its international partners. The U.S. Senate report clearly outlines a pattern of systemic denial of human rights and trampling of U.S. values as outlined in the U.S. <More>

VFP Endorses - National Week of Action to Challenge CIA and NSA crimes

From December 10 to 15, a coalition of organizations from across the US are co-sponsoring a week of grassroots action to highlight crimes by government intelligence agencies, including CIA torture, NSA spying, and profiling & violence with impunity by local police departments.

Vigils, protests, workshops, and other events will start nationwide on International Human Rights Day (December 10th) and conclude on Bill of Rights Day (December 15th).
ATTORNEY GENERAL: PROSECUTE TORTURE

Brian Sonenstein, Firedoglake.com act@firedoglake.com via uark.ed to James u

Tell the Next Attorney General to Prosecute Torture!

Dear Dick,

Attorney General Eric Holder is expected to resign soon, and President Obama is considering his replacement.¹

Sign our petition demanding the next Attorney General prosecute the use of torture in the war on terror.

It's been many years since the American public first learned about our government's illegal use of torture against detainees in the war on terror. Yet the only person to go to prison is John Kiriakou -- the whistleblower who exposed the program.

It's no secret that the US government has not lived up to the public's expectations in this regard. As Kevin Gosztola recently reported, our government has admitted to the UN that there has been an unwillingness and failure at the Department of Justice to prosecute torture.²

The longer we wait, the more difficult it will be to hold torturers accountable. Already, those responsible have tried to protect themselves by destroying evidence and obstructing senate investigators from informing the public of our unfortunate history in the war on terror.

It's not clear who the President will tap for the next Attorney General, but it's critical that we take a stand now and demand that whoever he chooses will pursue justice for illegal torture.

Sign our petition to the incoming Attorney General to prosecute all those responsible for CIA torture.

Thank you for standing up against torture.

In Solidarity

Brian Sonenstein
Campaign Director
Firedoglake.com

Sources:

Firedoglake is supported entirely by small donations from people like you. Can you chip in to keep us strong? Click here to contribute.

A Spanish judge has just decided to proceed with a case against Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld, prosecuting them for torture at Guantanamo.

The Spanish legislature can be expected to try to block the case, unless perhaps they hear our voices loudly and clearly enough.

Click here to sign the letter we will deliver to Spain.

We began this effort in 2011, visiting Spanish embassies, generating media and placing advertisements in Spain, and communicating our appreciation for Spanish efforts to prosecute U.S. torturers. Now we need another big push.

Please sign the letter now!

After signing the petition, please forward this message to your friends. You can also share it from the webpage after taking the action yourself.

-- The RootsAction.org team

Partner organizations behind this effort include: CodePink Women for Peace, High Road for Human Rights, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, National Accountability Action Network, National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance, Pax Christi USA, Progressive Democrats of America, Psychologists for Social Responsibility, Robert Jackson Steering Committee, RootsAction.org, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, Tackling Torture at the Top Committee of Women Against Military Madness, Veterans for Peace, Voters for Peace, War Criminals Watch, WarIsACrime.org, WeThePeopleNow.org, and World Can’t Wait.

Let Spain know we support its efforts to enforce the law.

Share this action on Facebook

Share this action on Twitter

Now you can create your own petitions -- click here!

Featured DIY action:

Change the Scope and Funding of Our Military and Invest in Domestic Spending Instead
Additional signers include: Amnesty International USA, Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Council for the National Interest, Democrats.com, Fellowship on Reconciliation, United for Peace and Justice, Velvet Revolution, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, War Resisters League, Witness Against Torture, the BRussells Tribunal, No More Guantanamos.

P.S. RootsAction is an independent online force endorsed by Jim Hightower, Barbara Ehrenreich, Cornel West, Daniel Ellsberg, Glenn Greenwald, Naomi Klein, Bill Fletcher Jr., Laura Flanders, former U.S. Senator James Abourezk, Coleen Rowley, Frances Fox Piven, and many others.

P.P.S. This work is only possible with your financial support. Please donate.

Background:
AFP: Spanish Judge Defies Pressure to Scrap Guantanamo Torture Case Against Bush

www.RootsAction

AMY DAVIDSON

OCTOBER 7, 2010

Who Needs Torture?

BY AMY DAVIDSON

Some of the responses to the exclusion of a witness from the trial of Ahmed Ghailani—let’s take Liz Cheney’s, for an easy, blatant example—seem to assume that if torture plus due process equals difficulty getting a conviction, then there is a problem with due process. No: there is a problem with torture. There are many problems with it, actually (moral, epistemological, political). But we are all weak and the idea of beating up or drowning a person can be tempting, apparently. That is why the penalties for torture have to be very high. One practical reason not to torture people is that it messes up prosecutions.

Liz Cheney wrote to TPM that

By insisting on trying Ahmed Ghailani in civilian court with full constitutional rights, instead of by military commission, President Obama and Attorney General Holder are jeopardizing the prosecution of a terrorist who killed 224 people at U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania…. If the American people needed any further proof that this Administration’s policy of treating terrorism like a law enforcement matter is irresponsible and reckless, they received it today.
Really, we received proof that the Bush Administration’s use of torture was irresponsible and reckless. What is Cheney actually saying about military commissions? If the exclusion of evidence gained by torture is “proof” of the need for military commissions, does that mean that they are necessary because they allow us to torture? All the more reason to avoid them. (And there are some limits even there: Charles Stimson, a former Bush Administration official, told the Washington Post that “It’s not clear the outcome would have been any different in a commission.”) What is so desirable about torture that we would create contorted legal structures—and throw away ones that have served us well—as tools for torturing?

Let’s even assume, for the sake of argument, that the information you get from torture is sometimes accurate. When someone will say anything to make torture stop, how do we know which things he says are good or not? More torture?

The defense, by the way, does not just get to cry torture and get things thrown out. From Judge Lewis Kaplan’s order:

The Court has had the benefit of extensive evidentiary submissions, a three-day hearing at which Abebe and representatives of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the CIA, the Tanzanian National Police testified, legal briefs, and skilled argument. On the basis of that record—including importantly its assessment of the credibility of the only witnesses called to testify who actually were present when Abebe was persuaded to confess his role, to implicate Ghailani, and to cooperate with authorities—it now finds and concludes that the government has failed to prove that Abebe’s testimony is sufficiently attenuated from Ghailani’s coerced statements to permit its receipt in evidence.

The issue was attenuation because the prosecution did not even contest that Ghailani had been “coerced.” (One also wonders how Abebe, who was expected to testify that he had sold TNT to Ghailani, was “persuaded.”) More from Kaplan:

The Court has not reached this conclusion lightly. It is acutely aware of the perilous nature of the world in which we live. But the Constitution is the rock upon which our nation rests. We must follow it not only when it is convenient, but when fear and danger beckon in a different direction. To do less would diminish us and undermine the foundation upon which we stand.

When you lose a game because of fairly called penalties you don’t blame the penalties; you blame the fouls. And it’s not like this game is over: Ghailani is still on trial, and one would think that the government has some other evidence against him. It should: it won an indictment against him in 1998, and chased him for six years before even learning Abebe’s name. If we’d caught him in the beginning, without the benefit of secret prisons or Guantánamo, we still could have dealt with him, in America and on American terms. He has been in New York for several months now, and the city is doing all right.

It is also interesting to contrast the discreet exclusion of a single witness because of torture—while the prosecution itself proceeds—with the way both the Bush and Obama Administrations have been able to get entire cases thrown out by invoking the state-secrets privilege. Courts do know how to act surgically, if they are allowed to.

So why does it bother Liz Cheney and others so much that an accused murderer would be tried for his crimes in a real, solid court? Is it simply because it belies the need for fake courts
and indefinite detention? (That setup has yielded hardly any completed prosecutions.) Or is the idea that we have to use military commissions so that no one will know what we did in the years after September 11th? Building a system that, going forward, will undermine the rule of law is no way to deal with the past. Courts can do that, too.

Amy Davidson is a *New Yorker* staff writer. She is a regular Comment contributor for the magazine and writes a Web column, in which she covers war, sports, and everything in between.

**Jon Wiener**

They Said ‘No’ to Torture: The Real Heroes of the Bush Years.

*Jon Wiener on December 15, 2014 - 12:57 PM*

_Demonstrators in Washington call for President Obama to close US Military Detention Facility in Guantánamo Bay._ (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Hidden in the Senate torture report are stories of some heroes—people inside the CIA who from the beginning said torture was wrong, who tried to stop it, who refused to participate. There were also some outside the CIA, in the military and the FBI, who risked careers and reputations by resisting—and who sometimes paid a heavy price. They should be thanked and honored.

But President Obama hasn’t mentioned them. Instead, he praised the CIA officials who presided over the torture regime as “patriots.”

We should “celebrate the ones who stood up for what was right,” says David Luban of the Georgetown University law school, author of *Torture, Power and Law.* Jane Mayer of *The New Yorker,* author of the definitive book on Bush administration torture, *The Dark Side,* calls them “the real torture patriots.”

The opposition to torture within the CIA was so strong, Mayer reports, that the CIA Inspector General, John Helgerson, “conducted a serious and influential internal investigation.” That led the Justice Department to “ask the CIA to suspend the torture program”—at least “until it could be reconciled with the law.”

The heroes in the torture report include Ali Soufan, former FBI agent and interrogator of terrorists who, according to Lawrence Wright in *The Looming Tower,* came closer than anyone to
preventing the 9/11 attacks. Soufan has argued publicly against torture and in favor of “rapport-building” as the best technique to get information from suspects. The CIA heavily censored his memoir *The Black Banners* in what Wright called an effort “to punish a critic and to obscure history.” He was featured in a *Frontline* documentary made by Martin Smith and James Gilmore.

Another hero: Alberto Mora. As general counsel of the Navy in 2004, Jane Mayer reported, he tried to stop the torture program. He told his superiors at the Pentagon that the Bush torture policy violated the Geneva Conventions’ prohibition of torture and “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment.” He described the Bush program as “unlawful” and “dangerous,” and warned that the torturers could face criminal prosecution. He was featured in the documentary *Taxi to the Dark Side* by Alex Gibney (which won the Best Documentary Oscar in 2007).

Some of the heroes were ordinary soldiers, like Sgt. Joe Darby, who first revealed the Abu Ghraib abuses. As a result, Luban points out, he “had to live under armed protection for six months.” Others were high officials, like Philip Zelikow, an adviser to Condoleezza Rice, who, Luban reports, wrote an “anti-torture memo” that the White House “attempted to destroy.”

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And there was Ian Fishback, an army captain who reported that his own unit was abusing Iraqi prisoners. Eventually he wrote an open letter to Senator John McCain, asking, “Do we sacrifice our ideals in order to preserve security?” His answer: “I would rather die fighting than give up even the smallest part of the idea that is ‘America.’”

Finally we have the case of Guantánamo prosecutor Lt. Col. Darrel Vandeveld, who refused to prosecute a teenager who had been abused in US detention in Afghanistan and Guantánamo. For that decision, Jameel Jaffer and Larry Siems report, Vandeveld was “barred from the prosecutors’ office, confined to his residence and threatened with dismissal from the Army.”

The Senate torture report describes CIA personnel “profoundly affected…to the point of tears” by witnessing torture, but it doesn’t reveal the names of those whose protests led to the inspector general’s internal investigation. We need to know who they are—so we can thank them for trying to do the right thing.

Obama has made it clear from the beginning that there will be no criminal prosecutions of the torturers, even though their actions violated the federal Torture Act. The least he could
do is publicly honor those who tried to stop the crimes conducted in our name.

The ACLU has set up a web page with a petition to President Obama to “honor those who said no to torture.”

Read Next: “US Torture Didn’t End When Bush Left Office”

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND and CONTEXTS TO INVASION, OCCUPATION, TORTURE

Daily Digest 12/23/2014

Democracy Now! digest@democracynow.org via uark.edu

TWO (OF THE THREE) ARTICLES ON TORTURE IN Z MAGAZINE FEB. 2015
US, TORTURE, AND LATIN AMERICA (--Dick)

Edward S. Herman, “Speaking Truth to Power or to the Powerless?”

His and Chomsky’s 1979 book The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism (2nd ed. 2014) provides a chart showing the connections between the US and 26 torture-employing clients, expenditures, and security personnel trained. Herman reminds his readers, not to soften criticism of Bush-Cheney-Rice-Yoo-Obama crimes, but to ask when the public will finally demand prosecution of torturers.

Paul Street, “Latin America Takes the Lead in Opposing Torture.”

“Over the many decades of its unmatched global power, Washington has decided that millions of citizens across the planet don’t really deserve freedom, comfort, and even life itself. As the first global region to feel the imperial presence and fury of the United States and to see US power embedded in its own social and political life – as the (US of) American Empire’s “workshop” – Latin America logically leads the world in rejecting US power both “soft” and hard – both the “Washington consensus” neoliberal economic model
and the Washington war of terror and surveillance – in the deadly “neoliberal” era.”

To read the full article: https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/latin-america-leads-in-opposing-us-torture-and-surveillance/

ADDITIONAL WRITINGS on TORTURE VIA HISTORIANS AGAINST THE WAR

"The CIA's Phony Defense"
By John Prados, History News Network, posted December 14
The author is a senior fellow of the National Security Archives and director of its CIA Documentation Project.

"CIA ‘Torture Report': Agency Conduct Was Driven by Pressure to Link Iraq to al-Qaeda Following 9/11"
By Andrew Cockburn, The Independent, posted December 14

"American Torture -- Past, Present, and ... Future?"
By Rebecca Gordon, TomDispatch.com, posted December 14
The author's book Mainstreaming Torture: Ethical Approaches in the Post-9/11 United States was published this year by Oxford University Press.

"John Brennan Is Still Lying"
By Andrew Sullivan, ReaderSupportedNews.org, posted December 13

"Torture Report Highlights Consequences of Permanent War"
By Andrew J. Bacevich, Boston Globe, posted December 10
The author, retired from teaching history at Boston University, is a fellow of Columbia University's School of Public and International Affairs.

"Timeline: The Tortured History of the Senate’s Torture Report"
By Kara Breandeisky and Sisi Wei, ProPublica, posted December 9

LETTER FROM CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE 4-18-14
Dear Mr. Bennett,

Thank you for your recent gift to the Center for Victims of Torture. I received your note regarding our program in Jordan. Our website includes up to date information about all of our programs. You can find more information regarding Jordan here: http://www.cvt.org/jordan.

Thank you so much for your inquiry and please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Warm regards,

Ashley Gotreau
Senior Development Associate
Direct: 612.436.4892

The Center for Victims of Torture
649 Dayton Avenue / St. Paul, MN 55104

www.cvt.org

CVT: Restoring the Dignity of the Human Spirit

RECENT OMNI NEWSLETTERS

RECENT OMNI NEWSLETTERS. Look at these subjects. All relate some more some less to US militarism, imperialism, and war-making and to their consequences, and to protest.

Anti-War #4, 1-26
MLKJR DAY, 1-20
Iran #25, 1-17
Cuba #4, 1-16
Vegetarian Action #15, 1-14
Democracy #3, 1-12
Flag Patriotism #2, 1-9
Fossil Fuels #3, 1-4

Write or Call the White House

President Obama is committed to creating the most open and accessible administration in American history. That begins with taking comments and questions from you, the public, through our website.
Call the President

PHONE NUMBERS
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414

TTY/TTD
Comments: 202-456-6213
Visitor’s Office: 202-456-2121

Write a letter to the President
Here are a few simple things you can do to make sure your message gets to the White House as quickly as possible.

1. If possible, email us! This is the fastest way to get your message to President Obama.

2. If you write a letter, please consider typing it on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet of paper. If you hand-write your letter, please consider using pen and writing as neatly as possible.

3. Please include your return address on your letter as well as your envelope. If you have an email address, please consider including that as well.

4. And finally, be sure to include the full address of the White House to make sure your message gets to us as quickly and directly as possible:

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

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Marjorie Cohn, Book, US Torture Since 1950s
Danner. Book: US History
Report, US Torture in Afghanistan and Iraq Wars
UN Torture Report
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Former Contractor Suing Donald Rumsfeld
Physicians, Report: Medical Evidence for Torture
Film: Taxi to the Dark Side
Film: *Five Fingers*, CIA Torture
Olbermann on Gen. Petraeus and Torture
Prosecutors Drop Case Against CIA “Advanced Interrogators”
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Dick Bennett

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Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
jbennet@uark.edu
Blog
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

j.dick.bennett@gmail.com
(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703