

Secret Reports Reveal All. The “Efficacy” of CIA Torture, Saudi Involvement in 9/11

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It is sometimes disorienting to note that a federal bureaucracy that we have grown to mistrust over the past decade occasionally can be a source of reliable information that actually discredits what the government itself is saying. On those all too rare occasions Leviathan appears to be so unfocused that his right hand and left hand are out of sync. To cite only one example, I have a number of times noted that while the White House and Congress continue to hype the terrorist threat for political and budgetary reasons the State Department's annual [Country Reports on Terrorism](#), if read carefully, actually demonstrates that terrorism is in precipitous decline worldwide.

Two investigative reports that were classified to prevent the information they contained from becoming public have recently been in the news. One is the Senate Intelligence Committee's exhaustive [review](#) of the efficacy of the torture that was [carried out](#) by CIA officers in 2002-6 and the other is the 28 pages long [chapter](#) on Saudi Arabian involvement that was redacted from the final published version of the 9/11 Commission's report. The reports are important because they together illustrate different ways in which the rule of law was largely ignored by the White House in the wake of 9/11. They also challenge the established narratives on 9/11 itself and the intelligence community response to the alleged threat posed by terrorism.

The torture program had already been critiqued by no less than the CIA's own Office of the Inspector General, which finally made public a heavily redacted [report](#) in 2009 stating that post 9/11 torture “and abusive tactics” had produced no significant intelligence that preempted any terrorist attacks against American targets. The report, based on a study carried out in 2004 that was subsequently the subject of a flurry of memos between CIA and the Justice Department, was challenged by some Agency officers who had been involved in the program and the report itself provided some wiggle room in stating that “It is difficult to quantify with confidence and precision the effectiveness of the program.”

The dissenting view of advocates for “enhanced interrogation” has been disseminated widely by FOX News and the Wall Street Journal among other media outlets. No CIA torturer has been punished for actions that many believe equate to war crimes and the Obama Administration as one of its first acts in 2009 [announced](#) that there would be no “looking backward” on the issue. The official who was most directly involved in ordering the CIA torture program, Jose Rodriguez, illegally ordered the video evidence of the interrogations destroyed but the Justice Department opted not to prosecute him. Rodriguez, who headed the CIA's Counterterrorism Center before becoming Director of the National Clandestine Service, has [reportedly](#) since 2010 held a senior level position in the National Interest Security Company, which is owned by IBM. He appears occasionally on television to [defend](#)

the Agency's record on torture (though he does not use the word), claiming, uniquely, that it led to the killing of Osama bin Laden.

The one year old completely classified Senate study, which examined every single interrogation carried out by CIA, concluded, as did the Agency IG report, that the torture regime had produced no appreciable results but its value relative to debunking the CIA effort is its comprehensiveness. There is no denying its conclusions as every one of six million documents relating to the rendition and interrogation programs was carefully examined. The report itself, 6,300 pages long with no less than 50 pages of bullet points, took three years to research. Some of its conclusions have [reportedly](#) been rebutted by a CIA team, which prepared a 122 page response in June that was presented to the committee. It has been alleged that the Agency discovered "significant errors" in the investigation and analysis, but those flaws, if they truly exist, have never been made public.

The Senate Intelligence Committee [cannot release](#) the torture report. That must be done by CIA, which is in no hurry to do so. As a byproduct of the February approval hearings for John Brennan as CIA Director and the December nomination hearings over CIA's new top lawyer Caroline Krass, an Obama appointee, the Senate is now [demanding](#) that CIA stop stalling and clear an edited version of the report suitable for the public. It is also demanding an internal CIA document that apparently agrees with the Senate report's conclusions but Krass is resisting, claiming that a series of CIA and Justice Department memos relating to the Senate report are "pre decisional," an obvious attempt to prolong the process and a prime example why when Shakespeare suggested that "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" he was being eminently sensible.

The CIA defense appears to be based on the argument that it was authorized to employ "extreme measures" against terrorist suspects by the Justice Department, meaning that the actual efficacy of the practice was and always will be a secondary consideration. Insiders at the Agency suggest that the problem with releasing the full Senate report is not so much what it says but what it implies. A catalogue of meticulously documented war crimes that were ultimately pointless in terms of national security might lead to demands for accountability. Accountability means that CIA people will go to jail.

Other groups are also [seeking](#) to obtain release of the report arguing that closure over the issue cannot be achieved until there is some understanding of what exactly the United States government did after 9/11. In mid-December of coalition of religious groups including Christian, Jewish, and Muslim clergy sent a letter to the Senate Intelligence Committee asking that the report be released.

The Saudi section of the 9/11 report is another example of making up the rules as one goes along which has characterized the "unitary executive" American presidency over the past twelve years. The details of Saudi involvement, which reportedly include Royal Family funding of some of the men who carried out 9/11, is still secret more than twelve years after the airline hijackings. Fifteen of the nineteen alleged hijackers were Saudis.

Some congressmen who have read the redacted information were shocked by what they learned and are now demanding that the information be [made public](#). CIA and FBI information confirming existing open source reports suggesting that Saudi government diplomats and intelligence officers actually helped the hijackers would be politically explosive and one should expect that the Obama Administration will not cooperated with

[efforts](#) by congressmen Walter Jones and Stephen Lynch, respectively a North Carolina Republican and a Massachusetts Democrat, to release the entire report.

A true accounting of what took place is long overdue and, one might add, it should not stop with the Saudis. Some of the hijackers spent considerable time in Pakistan prior to 9/11 and it is unlikely that the Pakistani Intelligence Service (ISI) would have missed their presence or the opportunity to recruit them as sources. Also the Israelis, who were running a massive intelligence operation inside the United States, appear to have had at least some prior knowledge of what was going to occur. The [account](#) of the “Five Dancing Shlomos” celebrating in Liberty Park as the twin towers burned suggests at a minimum prior knowledge and possibly even more than that as Israel had a strong motive to encourage a major terrorist attack in the US which would tie Washington to Tel Aviv in a tight anti-Muslim terrorism embrace. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu subsequently [described](#) the 9/11 attack as good news.

The bin Laden family as well as numerous Saudi officials were [flown out](#) of the US immediately after 9/11 and the Israelis implicated in several Mossad cover companies were questioned but eventually [released](#) under pressure from their Embassy. Insofar as can be determined, the possible Pakistani connection has never been seriously examined. Public records relating to all the arrests and investigations of possible foreign agents have either disappeared or been classified.

If the United States is ever to become a normal country again where the rule of law is respected and high government officials are held accountable, it is absolutely essential that the still classified sections of the 9/11 report and the entirety of the Senate Committee report on CIA “extreme measures” be made public. President Obama ran for office declaring that his administration would be accountable and open but it has been nothing of the sort. He declares that the torture and renditions have ceased but until there is a full rendering of all the unconscionable things that have taken place over the past twelve years, why should anyone trust him, particularly as he has himself introduced an increased level of drone warfare and a targeted assassination program. If there were foreign governments involved in 9/11 and if the CIA carried out a horrific torture program that served no purpose the American people now have a right to know.

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