

The CIA's New Nominee Director Gina Haspel Once Ran a Torture Site and Destroyed Evidence

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As CIA director Mike Pompeo moves to become the United States' secretary of state, deputy director Gina Haspel has been nominated to lead the agency. If confirmed by the Senate, she will become the first woman to run the CIA.

Haspel's nomination will be controversial; she [played a leading role](#) (paywall) in running a US torture site abroad and later destroyed the evidence of it.

In 2002, she oversaw a secret prison in Thailand that tortured two terrorism suspects. That torture took place within the CIA's "extraordinary rendition" program, in which suspected terrorists are sent to US allies, and interrogated in "black sites" on their soil.

One of the men, known as Abu Zubayda, was waterboarded 83 times in one month and was slammed into walls by the head. He was deprived of sleep and kept in a [coffin-like](#) box. Interrogators later decided he didn't have any useful information.

ProPublica found that Haspel [personally signed](#) cables to CIA headquarters that detailed Zubayda's interrogation.

CIA videos of the torture [were destroyed](#) in 2005, on the orders of a cable drafted by Haspel. Her then-boss Jose Rodriguez, the CIA's director of operations for counterterrorism, signed off on the order.

"The cable left nothing to chance. It even told them how to get rid of the tapes," he wrote in his memoir, according to ProPublica. "They were to use an industrial-strength shredder to do the deed."

The European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, a Berlin-based NGO, has [been pushing](#) Germany's public prosecutor to arrest Haspel for her role in the torture program.

She is not the only member of the administration with a questionable record on the matter: Trump himself has publicly [flirted with](#) the idea of the US returning to the use of torture, claiming that waterboarding "works." He was reportedly persuaded by defense secretary Jim Mattis that the method is an ineffective intelligence tool.

New secretary of state Mike Pompeo has also defended US torture. In 2014, when senator Dianne Feinstein, then chair of Senate Intelligence Committee, released a comprehensive condemnation of the CIA's torture program, Pompeo [attacked the report](#), saying,

“Senator Feinstein today has put American lives at risk,” and described agents who had tortured people as “heroes, not pawns in some liberal game.”

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