

U.S. Military Drugged Detainees to Obtain FALSE Confessions

Self-confessed 9/11 “mastermind” falsely confessed to crimes he didn’t commit

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U.S. Drugged Detainees, Which Interfered with their Ability to Tell the Truth

The Inspector General for the the U.S. Department of Defense reports that the military heavily drugged some detainees in a way which [impaired their ability to provide accurate information](#):

Detainees in custody of the US military were interrogated while drugged with powerful antipsychotic and other medications that “could impair an individual’s ability to provide accurate information,” according to a declassified Department of Defense (DoD) inspector general’s report.

Over the past decade, dozens of current and former detainees and their civilian and military attorneys have alleged in news reports and in court documents that prisoners held by the US government in Guantanamo, Iraq and Afghanistan were forcibly injected with unknown medications and pills during or immediately prior to marathon interrogation sessions in an attempt to compel them to confess to terrorist-related crimes of which they were accused.

Leonard Rubenstein, a medical ethicist at Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health and Human Rights and the former president of Physicians for Human Rights, said ... “The problem is not simply what the report implies, that good information is unlikely to be obtained when someone shows psychotic symptoms....”

Shayana Kadidal, the senior managing attorney of the Guantanamo Project at the Center for Constitutional Rights, said what struck him after he read the report is “under the system set up by the [US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia], any statements detainees made during these interrogations would be presumed accurate even if detainees took medication that could produce unreliable information.”

When the inspector general sought to interview the attorney representing one detainee who claimed he was given mind-altering drugs during interrogations, the attorney responded, “at this state of his incarceration, [redacted] memory is severely compromised and, unfortunately, we are skeptical that he can provide you with any further details ...”

Al-Nusairi claimed he was injected with an unknown medication that made him extremely

sleepy just before he was interrogated in 2002. When his captors awakened him, he fabricated a confession for US interrogators in hopes they would leave him alone so he could sleep.

“I was completely gone,” al-Nusairi told his attorney, Anant Raut. “I said, ‘Let me go. I want to go to sleep. If it takes saying I’m a member of al-Qaeda, I will.’”

“I think any rational person would agree that confessions of terrorism while under the influence of mind-altering drugs are about as credible as professions of love while under the influence of alcohol,” Raut, al-Nusairi’s attorney, told Truthout.

Part of a Systemic Effort to Produce False Confessions

These revelations only make sense when taken in context.

We’ve previously noted that [the entire purpose behind the U.S. torture program was to obtain false confessions](#).

For example, the torture techniques used were [Communist techniques specifically designed to produce false confessions](#):

As I [noted](#) in 2009:

Senator Levin, in [commenting](#) on the Senate Armed Services Committee report on torture declassified today, drops the following bombshell:

With last week’s release of the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) opinions, it is now widely known that Bush administration officials distorted Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape “SERE” training – a legitimate program used by the military to train our troops to resist abusive enemy interrogations – by authorizing abusive techniques from SERE for use in detainee interrogations. Those decisions conveyed the message that abusive treatment was appropriate for detainees in U.S. custody. They were also an affront to the values articulated by General Petraeus.

In SERE training, U.S. troops are briefly exposed, in a highly controlled setting, to abusive interrogation techniques used by enemies that refuse to follow the Geneva Conventions. The techniques are based on tactics used by Chinese Communists against American soldiers during the Korean War for the purpose of eliciting false confessions for propaganda purposes. Techniques used in SERE training include stripping trainees of their clothing, placing them in stress positions, putting hoods over their heads, subjecting them to face and body slaps, depriving them of sleep, throwing them up against a wall, confining them in a small box, treating them like animals, subjecting them to loud music and flashing lights, and exposing them to extreme temperatures. Until recently, the Navy SERE school also used waterboarding. The purpose of the SERE program is to provide U.S. troops who might be captured a taste of the treatment they might face so that they might have a better chance of surviving captivity and resisting abusive and coercive interrogations.

Senator Levin then documents that SERE techniques were deployed as part of an official policy on detainees, and that SERE instructors helped to implement the interrogation programs.

The senior Army SERE psychologist warned in 2002 against using SERE training techniques during interrogations in an email to personnel at Guantanamo Bay, because:

[T]he use of physical pressures brings with it a large number of potential negative side effects... When individuals are gradually exposed to increasing levels of discomfort, it is more common for them to resist harder... If individuals are put under enough discomfort, i.e. pain, they will eventually do whatever it takes to stop the pain. This will increase the amount of information they tell the interrogator, but it does not mean the information is accurate. In fact, it usually decreases the reliability of the information because the person will say whatever he believes will stop the pain... Bottom line: the likelihood that the use of physical pressures will increase the delivery of accurate information from a detainee is very low. The likelihood that the use of physical pressures will increase the level of resistance in a detainee is very high... (p. 53).

I also [pointed out](#):

McClatchy [fills in](#) some of the details:

Former senior U.S. intelligence official familiar with the interrogation issue said that Cheney and former Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld demanded that the interrogators find evidence of al Qaida-Iraq collaboration...

For most of 2002 and into 2003, Cheney and Rumsfeld, especially, were also demanding proof of the links between al Qaida and Iraq that (former Iraqi exile leader Ahmed) Chalabi and others had told them were there."

It was during this period that CIA interrogators waterboarded two alleged top al Qaida detainees repeatedly — Abu Zubaydah at least 83 times in August 2002 and Khalid Sheik Muhammed 183 times in March 2003 — according to a newly released Justice Department document...

When people kept coming up empty, they were told by Cheney's and Rumsfeld's people to push harder," he continued."Cheney's and Rumsfeld's people were told repeatedly, by CIA . . . and by others, that there wasn't any reliable intelligence that pointed to operational ties between bin Laden and Saddam . . .

A former U.S. Army psychiatrist, Maj. Charles Burney, told Army investigators in 2006 that interrogators at the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detention facility were under "pressure" to produce evidence of ties between al Qaida and Iraq.

"While we were there a large part of the time we were focused on trying to establish a link between al Qaida and Iraq and we were not successful in establishing a link between al Qaida and Iraq," Burney told staff of the Army Inspector General. "The more frustrated people got in not being able to establish that link . . . there was more and more pressure to resort to measures that might produce more immediate results."

"I think it's obvious that the administration was scrambling then

to try to find a connection, a link (between al Qaida and Iraq)," [Senator] Levin said in a conference call with reporters. "They made out links where they didn't exist."

Levin recalled Cheney's assertions that a senior Iraqi intelligence officer had met Mohammad Atta, the leader of the 9/11 hijackers, in the Czech Republic capital of Prague just months before the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The FBI and CIA found that no such meeting occurred.

In other words, top Bush administration officials not only knowingly lied about a non-existent connection between Al Qaida and Iraq, but they pushed and insisted that interrogators use special torture methods aimed at extracting false confessions to attempt to create such a false linkage.

Writing about this today, Paul Krugman [says](#):

Let's say this slowly: the Bush administration wanted to use 9/11 as a pretext to invade Iraq, even though Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11. So it tortured people to make them confess to the nonexistent link.

There's a word for this: it's evil.

The Washington Post [reported](#) the same year:

Despite what you've seen on TV, torture is really only good at one thing: eliciting false confessions. Indeed, Bush-era torture techniques, we now know, were cold-bloodedly modeled after methods used by Chinese Communists to extract confessions from captured U.S. servicemen that they could then use for propaganda during the Korean War.

So as shocking as the latest revelation in a new Senate Armed Services Committee report may be, it actually makes sense — in a nauseating way. The White House started pushing the use of torture not when faced with a "ticking time bomb" scenario from terrorists, but when officials in 2002 were desperately casting about for ways to tie Iraq to the 9/11 attacks — in order to strengthen their public case for invading a country that had nothing to do with 9/11 at all.

Gordon Trowbridge writes for the Detroit News: "Senior Bush administration officials pushed for the use of abusive interrogations of terrorism detainees in part to seek evidence to justify the invasion of Iraq, according to newly declassified information discovered in a congressional probe.

I [wrote](#) last month:

One of the two senior instructors from the Air Force team which taught U.S. servicemen how to resist torture by foreign governments when used to extract false confessions has blown the whistle on the true purpose behind the U.S. torture program.

Truth Out [reported](#) yesterday:

Jessen's notes were provided to Truthout by retired Air Force Capt. Michael Kearns, a "master" SERE instructor and [decorated](#) veteran who has previously held high-ranking positions within the Air Force Headquarters Staff and Department of Defense (DoD).

Kearns and his boss, Roger Aldrich, the head of the Air Force Intelligence's Special Survival Training Program (SSTP), based out of Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, Washington, hired Jessen in May 1989. Kearns, who was head of operations at SSTP and trained thousands of service members, said Jessen was brought into the program due to an increase in the number of new SERE courses being taught and "the fact that it required psychological expertise on hand in a full-time basis."

Jessen, then the chief of Psychology Service at the US Air Force Survival School, immediately started to work directly with Kearns on "a new course for special mission units (SMUs), which had as its goal individual resistance to terrorist exploitation."

The course, known as SV-91, was developed for the Survival Evasion Resistance Escape (SERE) branch of the US Air Force Intelligence Agency, which acted as the Executive Agent Action Office for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Jessen's notes formed the basis for one part of SV-91, "Psychological Aspects of Detention."

Kearns was one of only two officers within DoD qualified to teach all three SERE-related courses within SSTP on a worldwide basis, according to a copy of a 1989 letter written Aldrich, who [nominated him](#) officer of the year.

The Jessen notes clearly state the totality of what was being reverse-engineered – not just 'enhanced interrogation techniques,' but an entire program of exploitation of prisoners using torture as a central pillar," he said. "What I think is important to note, as an ex-SERE Resistance to Interrogation instructor, is the focus of Jessen's instruction. It is exploitation, not specifically interrogation. And this is not a picayune issue, because if one were to 'reverse-engineer' a course on resistance to exploitation then what one would get is a plan to exploit prisoners, not interrogate them. The CIA/DoD torture program appears to have the same goals as the terrorist organizations or enemy governments for which SV-91 and other SERE courses were created to defend against: the full exploitation of the prisoner in his intelligence, propaganda, or other needs held by the detaining power, such as the recruitment of informers and double agents. Those aspects of the US detainee program have not generally been discussed as part of the torture story in the American press."

Jessen wrote that cooperation is the "end goal" of the detainer, who wants the detainee "to see that [the detainer] has 'total' control of you because you are completely dependent on him, and thus you must comply with his wishes. Therefore, it is absolutely inevitable that you must cooperate with him in some way (propaganda, special favors, confession, etc.)."

Kearns said, based on what he has read in declassified government documents and news reports about the role SERE played in the Bush administration's torture program, Jessen clearly "reverse-engineered" his lesson plan and used resistance methods to abuse "war on terror" detainees.

So we have the two main Air Force insiders concerning the genesis of the torture program confirming - with original notes - that the whole purpose of the torture program was to extract false confessions.

Torture Program Produced False Confessions Regarding Terrorism

You might assume that torture was necessary or justified after 9/11.

Indeed, most of the information in the 9/11 Commission Report came from suspects who were tortured. Specifically, [most of the 9/11 Commission Report was based on 3rd hand reports of what people said while being tortured](#).

But remember that communist torture techniques specifically crafted to produce false confessions were used. Remember also:

- The [FBI interrogators](#) who actually interviewed some of the 9/11 suspects say torture didn't work

Another FBI interrogator of 9/11 suspects [said](#):

I was in the middle of this, and it's not true that these [aggressive] techniques were effective

One of the Main Sources for the 9/11 Commission Report was [Tortured Until He Agreed to Sign a Confession that He Was NOT EVEN ALLOWED TO READ](#)

The so-called 9/11 mastermind said: ["During ... My Interrogation I Gave A Lot Of False Information In Order To Satisfy What I Believed The Interrogators Wished To Hear"](#)

The self-confessed 9/11 "mastermind" [falsely confessed to crimes he didn't commit](#)

The Senior Counsel to the 9/11 Commission (John Farmer) - who led the 9/11 staff's inquiry - recently said: ["The CIA tapes of the interrogations were destroyed. The story of 9/11 itself, to put it mildly, was distorted and was completely different from the way things happened"](#)

A humanitarian aid worker said: [torture only stopped when I pretended I was in al Qaeda](#)

Under torture, Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi [claimed there was a link between Saddam Hussein, al-Qaida and WMD](#)

Torture Is ONLY Good For One Thing ... Producing False Confessions

Indeed, the top interrogation experts from U.S. military and intelligence services say that [all torture is lousy at producing actionable intelligence](#) ... and the *only thing* it is good for is to produce false confessions. For example:

The C.I.A.'s 1963 interrogation manual [stated](#):

Intense pain is quite likely to produce false confessions, concocted as a means of escaping from distress. A time-consuming delay results, while investigation is conducted and the admissions are proven untrue. During this respite the interrogatee can pull himself together. He may even use the time to think up new, more complex 'admissions' that take still longer to disprove.

An Army psychologist – Major Paul Burney, Army's Behavior Science Consulting Team psychologist – [said](#) (page 78 & 83):

[It] was stressed to me time and time again that psychological investigations have proven that harsh interrogations do not work. At best it will get you information that a prisoner thinks you want to hear to make the interrogation stop, but that information is strongly likely to be false.

Interrogation techniques that rely on physical or adverse consequences are likely to garner inaccurate information

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