

t  
truthout

# truthout • editorial

 [Print This Story](#)  [E-mail This Story](#)

 XML

Also see:

[AOL/Microsoft-Hotmail Preventing Delivery of Truthout Communications](#) •

d  
donate

[Go to Original](#)

## **Interrogators Don't Need to Torture; It Doesn't Work**

By Robert Weiner and John Larmett  
The Cleveland Plain Dealer

Friday 14 March 2008

S  
subscribe

The House vote this week was 225 to 188 - not enough to override President Bush's veto of legislation requiring the CIA to abide by the same interrogation rules that bar torture by the military.

i  
issues

Congress should pass new legislation and insist on "no torture" as universal U.S. policy. This should be a central presidential campaign issue.

Since the revelations of Abu Ghraib, President Bush has said repeatedly that "We do not torture."

e  
environment

Yet Gen. Michael Hayden, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, admitted in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Feb. 5 that the CIA had used waterboarding on terror suspects three times in recent years.

Gen. David Petraeus, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, said last year, "If we sanctioned torture or other expedient methods to obtain information from the enemy, that would be wrong. Beyond the basic fact that such actions are illegal, history shows that they also are frequently neither useful nor necessary."

m  
multimedia

Current law does not bind the CIA or other "national security" interrogators - the very ones who now have the exemption allowing "extreme methods." To bar it from those who don't do it, but allow it by those who do, is hypocritical at best. The use of electric shocks, sexual abuse and waterboarding are illegal under U.S. laws, but the president and even Sen. John McCain support the CIA's and their contractors' right to use them.

C  
contact

Last fall, McCain said that waterboarding "was used in the Spanish Inquisition, and there are reports it is being used against Buddhist monks today. It is torture."

However, on Feb. 13, McCain voted against the measure banning "harsh interrogation methods." (The measure passed in the Senate.) Claiming that the CIA should be differentiated from the Army Field Manual Guidelines, which McCain himself imposed, he said, "It is important to the war on terror that the CIA have the ability to detain and interrogate terrorists."

?  
about us

With deference to his POW and hero status, it must be stated that McCain has placed himself on the wrong side of this issue.

The government admits to three cases of waterboarding, but it's doubtful that is the limit. Former Vice President Al Gore has asked just how 100 young, vigorous soldiers died in our custody in prison in Abu Ghraib; no autopsies were conducted on these soldiers. The CIA's admission of waterboarding three people is a disingenuous way of ignoring what the CIA's contractors, as opposed to the CIA itself, have done. There is virtually no legal oversight abroad of

CIA contractors. Amnesty International has provided evidence of the "use of torture and ill-treatment against prisoners" at Guantanamo, in Afghanistan and Iraq. It turns out that the torturing was likely done by purposely unmonitored contractors.

Just how do we think the families, friends and colleagues of those who are tortured react when their loved ones finally get to tell the story? Torture is motivating terrorists.

On the Senate floor, Edward Kennedy gave some precision to torture techniques: "What constitutes unlawful and inhumane treatment of detainees are a wide range of abuses including death threats, beatings, broken bones, murder, exposure in elements, extreme forced physical exertion, hostage taking, stripping, sleep deprivation and degrading treatment."

The United States legally banned these techniques in dealing with the Japanese, Germans and Vietnamese in past wars and prosecuted perpetrators of those nations who used them.

Now that Americans know that the CIA destroyed at least two videotapes documenting waterboarding despite specific congressional warnings not to delete such tapes, the battle over who-covered-up-what is on. Questions include not just whether agency officials withheld information from Congress, the courts and the 9/11 commission, but who authorized the illegal behavior, and precisely what was done.

So far, all that we have gotten from the administration on these questions is tortured logic. "We do not torture" should mean, "We do not torture."

-----

*Weiner, president of Robert Weiner Associates Public Affairs and Issues Strategies, was a public affairs director in the Clinton administration. Larmett is a senior policy analyst at Robert Weiner Associates.*



-----

#### **Jump to today's Truthout Features:**

Today's Truthout Features 

*(In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, this material is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. t r u t h o u t has no affiliation whatsoever with the originator of this article nor is t r u t h o u t endorsed or sponsored by the originator.)*

*"Go to Original" links are provided as a convenience to our readers and allow for verification of authenticity. However, as originating pages are often updated by their originating host sites, the versions posted on TO may not match the versions our readers view when clicking the "Go to Original" links.*

 [Print This Story](#)  [E-mail This Story](#)

[| t r u t h o u t |](#) [issues](#) | [environment](#) | [labor](#) | [women](#) | [health](#) | [voter rights](#) | [multimedia](#) | [donate](#) | [contact](#) | [subscribe](#) | [about us](#)