

**INTERROGATIONS SIMPLY NEED TO BE HUMANE NOT
"ENHANCED"**

By Nick Gier

The weak will do anything to stop the pain;
The strong will resist until the end.

--a Roman jurist on torture

What does it mean "outrages upon human dignity"?

That is a statement wide open to interpretation.

--George W. Bush

There were no orange jump suits, hoods, or shackles. There was no water boarding, stress positions, beatings, or sensory deprivation. Just outside Washington, DC, Fort Hunt Park was home to 4,000 high level Nazi detainees during World War II. For the first time information about this project has been declassified, and some American soldiers who worked there were recently interviewed on National Public Radio on August 18, 2008.

At Fort Hunt Park American interrogators would play tennis and ride horses with the prisoners, and some were even invited off base to dinners at local restaurants. One incident was laden with deep irony: three detainees were allowed to go Christmas shopping for their families in a Jewish-owned department store.

Some of the detainees were scientists with knowledge of the German atomic bomb project. The future of Western civilization hung in the balance, but still the U.S. strictly adhered to the Third Geneva Convention of 1929 with regard to the humane treatment of prisoners. The Geneva Conventions do not make any exceptions, not even for the most imminent danger and none for new categories such as "unlawful combatants."

One scientist, Heinz Schlicke, had specific knowledge about the trigger for the German atomic bomb, and for a long while he refused to talk. Instead of using coercive techniques, the U.S. government sent a special team to Europe to find Schlicke's wife and two children. When the family was reunited, Schlicke became a U.S. friend for life.

Donald Gregg worked for the CIA for 30 years and was national security advisor to then Vice-President George H. W. Bush. While he was in Vietnam in the early 1970s, he noticed that his South Vietnamese counterparts were getting very poor intelligence. Gregg said that their basic problem was that "they routinely tortured prisoners, producing a flood of information, much of it totally false" (*New York Times*, 2/8/09).

Gregg took over the interrogation of a severely beaten prisoner. He continues: "I treated the prisoner's wounds, reunited him with his family and allowed him to make his first visit to Saigon. The result was a flood of actionable intelligence that allowed us to disrupt planned operations, including rocket attacks against Saigon."

In January 2002 Brig. Gen. Michael Lehnert was given orders to prepare the Guantanamo Naval Base for the arrival of first detainees from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Lehnert was very careful to follow the Geneva Convention of 1949 with a special focus on Article 3.1c, which prohibits "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment."

Lehnert also sent a request to the Pentagon asking that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) inspect the camp. To his dismay he learned that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld opposed ICRC involvement, so Lehnert called them directly, and within a week an ICRC team was there to advise him on how to comply with the Geneva Conventions.

Bypassing Lehnert, Rumsfeld set up a second command for "enhanced" interrogations and soon there was a major hunger strike and plans for forced

feeding were being made. Lehnert and a Muslim chaplain intervened and spent time one-one-one with the prisoners. As one surprised German detainee said later after his release: "Lehnert wanted to speak to the prisoners as human beings." For example, the Muslim chaplain placed a call to one detainee's wife and he received the good news that she had delivered a baby boy.

Rumsfeld removed Lehnert from his command and the hunger strike that he had nearly quelled flared up again. Forced feeding was implemented along with, as Jane Mayer describes in her book *The Dark Side*, "harsher interrogation techniques," including water boarding, total sensory deprivation, being shackled in stress positions, "psychological torment including religious and sexual humiliation," and the use of dogs to induce the extreme fear that Muslims have of them. A dog handler at Abu Ghraib would later be jailed for this, but none of the higher officers were prosecuted for this violation of international law.

In her book Mayer reports that Maj. Gen. Michael Dunlavey, the first commander at Guantanamo, had determined, primarily on the basis of reports from the first CIA officers at the base, that at least half the detainees in his prison did not belong there. When he expressed this opinion to the Pentagon, he was told to "please shut up and go home."

Although there had been no screening of the men, 95 percent of whom were turned in by bounty hunters for \$3-5,000 each, Rumsfeld summarily declared that the detainees were "among the most dangerous, best-trained, and vicious killers on the face of the earth."

In the fall of 2002, John Bellinger, Condi Rice's legal counsel, and General John Gordon of the National Security Council went to the White House hoping to reverse Rumsfeld's rash determination. Bush's attorney Alberto Gonzales attorney stood silent as David Addington, Cheney's attorney, declared that "the President has determined that they are all enemy combatants. We are not going to revisit it."

All of Mayer's accounts confirm the widely-held opinion that Cheney and Addington were the final word at the White House.

Working at Guantanamo, FBI agent Jim Clemente determined that 10 of the 18 new interrogation techniques were illegal, and he and other agents were horrified at the prisoners' degraded condition. The FBI agents there hoped that their protests would reach the highest level, but Mayer reports that they were probably blocked somewhere along the way.

In 2006 Matthew Alexander, with 14 years of experience as an Air Force helicopter pilot and counter-intelligence agent, volunteered as an interrogator in Iraq. It was his understanding that all interviews would abide by the Army Field Manual's prohibition on inhumane treatment, but he soon discovered that "enhanced" techniques were being used instead.

Alexander refused to break the rules and he insisted on training his team according to "a new methodology -- one based on building rapport with suspects, showing cultural understanding and using good old-fashioned brainpower to tease out information." His humane methods resulted in finding the location and the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq.

After his return to the U.S., Alexander was disgusted to learn that Iraqi detainees were still being tortured. Matthew Alexander is a pseudonym that the Pentagon required of him for security reasons, and military officials also insisted that he cut unclassified material (some of its from the Field Manual!) before they would OK the publication his book *How to Break a Terrorist: The US Interrogators Who Used Brains, Not Brutality, to Take Down the Deadliest Man in Iraq*.

Bush administration officials claimed that their techniques were justified because they received actionable intelligence. These claims, however, have been found to be false. After 53 days of the most degrading treatment imaginable, Mohammed al-Qahtani produced information that, according to FBI agent Brittain

Mallow, had already been obtained, as Mayer states, "from conventional detective work."

Mayer has determined that President Bush's three major claims about the results of torturing Abu Zubayda were false. For example, Bush claimed that Zubayda told interrogators that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was the 9/11 mastermind. The 9/11 Commission discovered that the CIA already knew this on August 28, 2001, while Bush, preferring to cut brush, was ignoring warnings of an imminent attack at his Crawford ranch.

The torture of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed led to a mass of false information. His false confession of personally killing Daniel Pearl caused unnecessary emotional turmoil for Pearl's widow and the rest of his family. The Pearl family was suspicious of this before it was confirmed, but Bush administration officials, as was their wont, used no caution in releasing any of this information.

The case of Ibn al-Libi is an especially egregious example of forced confession. In December, 2001, al-Libi had been turned over to the CIA by the Pakistanis and was then sent to Egypt to be interrogated. When asked about biological weapons, al-Libi didn't even understand what the word "biological" meant. He also didn't know who Saddam Hussein was, but under torture, he made up a story about three Al Qaeda members going to Iraq to learn about nuclear weapons.

Mayer discovered that there were suspicions (she had access to one Defense Department memo) all along that al-Libi's confessions were unreliable. Nevertheless, President Bush used the false connection between Hussein and Al Qaeda in an October 2002 speech, and it also was part of Colin Powell's sorely regretted presentation at the UN in February 2003, just before the invasion of Iraq.

Returning now to Donald Gregg, Bush 41's national security man, he concludes his short but powerful column with a story about a high level Iraqi

detainee who was treated humanely and who provided a great deal of valuable information. The man interrogated was Saddam Hussein.

Nick Gier taught philosophy for 31 years at the University of Idaho. Read his other column on torture at www.home.roadrunner.com/~nickgier/torture.htm The main sources for this column were Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror turned into a War on American Ideals*; Karen J. Greenberg, "When Gitmo was (relatively) Good," *The Washington Post* (Jan. 25, 2009); and Matthew Alexander, "I'm Still Tortured by What I Saw in Iraq," *The Washington Post* (Nov. 30, 2008).