

## Torture is Counterproductive

- ☑ **Science shows torture is counterproductive.** Although pain is commonly assumed to facilitate cooperation, scientific research suggests abusive questioning – including sleep deprivation and stress positions – makes it less likely that a detainee will provide his questioners useful information.<sup>1</sup>
- ☑ **History shows a poor record of success for those who use torture.** Popular wisdom holds that the Germans (during WWII), the Egyptians, the Syrians, the French (in Algeria), the British (in Northern Ireland), the Israelis, and others have engaged in forms of coercive questioning that have been effective. But Darius Rejali, a political scientist from Oregon who has spent decades examining the evidence, says these statements are “among the biggest myths associated with torture” and the proof of the efficacy of the use of coercion in all but a handful of these cases is not possible to find.<sup>2</sup>
- ☑ **Abusive questioning only strengthens the commitment of some detainees to their cause.** The Kubark manual, a CIA intelligence guide, explains: “Interrogatees who have withstood pain are more difficult to handle by other methods. The effect (of coercive questioning) has been not to repress the subject but to restore his confidence and maturity.”<sup>3</sup>
- ☑ **Torture can be so debilitating that prisoners are unable to respond coherently to questions.** *Educing Information*, a comprehensive study of interrogation science and practice developed for the U.S. intelligence community in 2006, warns, “The very means by which coercive methods undermine the source’s resistance posture also may concomitantly degrade their ability to report the intelligence information they possess in a valid, comprehensive fashion.”<sup>4</sup>
- ☑ **Torture often leads to a waste of time and resources.** Coercive questioning will lead to a multitude of bogus new leads as the victims generate made-up information to make the pain stop. Everything they say will need to be checked and rechecked, wasting valuable time and manpower.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the conclusions of *Educing Information*, a landmark study prepared for the U.S. intelligence community which finds (among other things) that “[p]sychological theory and some (indirectly) related research suggest that coercion or pressure can actually increase a source’s resistance and determination not to comply.” (185)

<sup>2</sup> Washington Post, 12/16/07; Outlook section

<sup>3</sup> Kubark Manual, July 1963; from Section H entitled “Pain”

<sup>4</sup> *Educing Information*, p. 133

**FACT SHEET**

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- ✓ **The overwhelming majority of professional interrogators say they do not need to use torture to make suspects talk.** U.S. interrogators are near-unanimous in their view that legal, rapport-building techniques are more sophisticated and a more effective way to elicit information from a hostile detainee. Even in so-called “ticking time bomb scenarios,” professional U.S. interrogators from the armed services, the CIA and the FBI have told Human Rights First that they would not use torture because it is such an unreliable way to question detainees.<sup>5</sup>
  
- ✓ **U.S. interrogators have a long history of success stretching back from the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan through Vietnam, Korea and WWII.** The most wanted men in Iraq – Saddam Hussein and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi – were discovered by U.S. interrogators using legal techniques, not torture. The National Defense Intelligence College researched some of the most successful U.S. interrogators of all time in a study called *Interrogation: World War II, Vietnam, and Iraq*, that was printed in 2008. The study shows that U.S. interrogators have succeeded over and over again, in difficult situations, using traditional rapport-building techniques permitted by U.S. and international law.
  
- ✓ **Torture will turn the local population against you, decreasing the likelihood that “walk-ins” will provide useful information.** A common mistake in intelligence gathering, according to experts, is to overvalue the potential to obtain information from detainees and undervalue tips from the local population. 90% of the best intelligence comes from open sources and walk-ins according to a recent report from Major General Michael Flynn, an intelligence officer with extensive experience in Afghanistan. “The real intelligence hero is Sherlock Holmes, not James Bond,” Flynn says.<sup>6</sup>
  
- ✓ **Using torture places U.S. troops at greater risk.** Violation of basic rules of international law by U.S. interrogators puts U.S. forces at greater risk that they will be tortured when they fall into enemy hands. Many senior U.S. military officials, including General Collin Powell<sup>7</sup>, have cited this concern in explaining why they oppose torture.
  
- ✓ **The use of torture undercuts U.S. moral credibility and serves as a recruiting tool for terrorists.** U.S. soldiers who worked in interrogation facilities in Iraq say that detainees often would be picked up with their pockets filled with pictures of abused prisoners from Abu Ghraib. “It was the number one reason we would hear for why people had picked up arms against us,” Eric Maddox, the interrogator who spearheaded the hunt for Saddam Hussein, told Human Rights First.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/2008/06/24/top-interrogators-declare-torture-ineffective-in-intelligence-gathering/>

<sup>6</sup> Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan, p. 23; January 2010

<sup>7</sup> Letter from General Powell to Senator McCain, September 13, 2006; <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/PowellLetter.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Human Rights First; July 22, 2009