



Want to Read a Top-Secret FBI Manual on Interrogation? Now You Can

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Let's say over the previous four years you were charged with learning all about top-secret FBI interrogation procedures. Somehow, some way you had to get your hands on those impossible-to-get-your-hands-on documents.

The problem, of course, is that such material is *verboten* to the general public.

But not, in this particular case, when you waltz through the doors of the Library of Congress.

That's right. Since at least 2010, a 70-page top-secret document has been sitting in a Library of Congress government archive open to the public. A [Mother Jones](#) reporter claims to have reviewed the completely unredacted manual available there last week.

So how did this happen?

The manual's author — an FBI supervisory special agent who once worked as a unit chief in the bureau's counterterrorism division — registered a copyright for the manual in 2010 and dropped off a copy at the U.S. Copyright Office, where members of the public can request to inspect it, Mother Jones said.

A few more kickers:

1. "A document that has not been released does not even need a copyright," Steven Aftergood, a government secrecy expert at the Federation of American Scientists, told Mother Jones.

"Who is going to plagiarize from it? Even if you wanted to, you couldn't violate the copyright because you don't have the document. It isn't available."

"Do they not cover this in orientation? [Sensitive] documents should not be placed in public repositories—and, by the way, aren't copyrightable," added Julian Sanchez, a fellow with the Cato

Institute who has studied copyright policy. “How do you even get a clearance without knowing this stuff?”

2. The FBI agent who registered for the copyright did so under his own name, Mother Jones said — which translates to claiming the rights for himself, not the FBI.

An FBI spokesman told Mother Jones the bureau is aware of the matter but “cannot provide any further information at this time regarding this subject.”

3. After getting hounded for years by the American Civil Liberties Union, the FBI finally gave in and made available top-secret documents of this sort, *including the manual in question*.

But the redacted interrogation manual released to the ACLU was dated February 23, 2011...which means an uncensored version was available to anybody at the Library of Congress at least a year earlier.

(The version of the interrogation manual the agent deposited with the copyright office is dated August 18, 2008, Mother Jones reported, but it wasn’t filed until January 2010.)

4. The Mother Jones reporter who inspected the unredacted manual at the Library of Congress reportedly compared it side-by-side to the redacted version, effectively deducing what content had been meant for the black-out pen. (And there was a good bit of that, Mother Jones noted, with entire pages covered over.)

The copyright office doesn’t let readers take photos or notes, but the reporter noted that a few redactions were eye-opening:

The ACLU has [previously criticized the interrogation manual](#) for endorsing the isolation of detainees and including favorable references to the KUBARK manual, a 1963 CIA interrogation guidebook that encouraged torture methods, including electric shocks. The group has also expressed concern that the manual adopts aspects of the Reid Technique, a common law enforcement interview method that has been known to produce [false confessions](#). A redacted sentence in the manual says the document is intended for use by the FBI’s “clean” teams—investigators who collect information intended for use in federal prosecutions. That raises the question of whether teams collecting information that’s not for use in federal courts would have to follow the manual’s (already permissive) guidelines at all.

Another section, blacked out in the version provided to the ACLU, encourages FBI agents to stage a “date-stamped full-body picture” of a detainee, complete with a bottle of water, for use in refuting abuse allegations at trial.

“Security screwups are not very uncommon. But this is a first,” Aftergood said. “The whole thing is a comedy of errors. It sounds like gross incompetence and ignorance.”