



Embassies brace for violence with release of CIA report

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Embassies and military facilities around the world are bracing for the release of a report on “enhanced interrogations” that Senate Democrats say will shine a light on one of the darkest chapters in America’s history.

The controversial review of waterboarding and other harsh interrogation techniques during the George W. Bush administration is expected to be unveiled Tuesday after years of analysis, editing and negotiations on and off Capitol Hill.

Lawmakers are primed for a raucous debate, with former spy officials preparing a counterattack to the conclusions in the analysis from Democrats on the Senate Intelligence Committee.

But even with redactions, the summary is likely to contain scores of new information about the techniques that were used on terrorism suspects after 9/11, with spy critic Sen. Mark Udall (D-Colo.) predicting Americans will be “disgusted” by what they learn.

Here are things to watch for when the report comes out.

Will the report name names?

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) has fought bitterly with the Obama administration over redactions on where the interrogations took place and which CIA and Bush administration officials were involved.

Obama officials have worried that too much disclosure could put Americans and allies at risk, but the CIA’s proposed changes outraged Democrats, who said the report had become nearly unreadable.

The disagreements have largely been hammered out, Feinstein says, but it remains to be seen how specific the report will get.

“The big question of this is how much of this has actually been redacted and whether or not we’re going to be able to figure out essentially who is responsible for doing what, when and all the rest of that,” said Patrick Eddington, a former CIA analyst who is now at the Cato Institute.

The fight over the redactions became so heated that White House chief of staff Denis McDonough reportedly visited Feinstein at her home in California to discuss them.

What techniques were used?

Democrats have suggested the report will show that the CIA’s interrogation programs were more brutal and widespread than previously known.

While the analysis is expected to detail the use of “waterboarding” on suspects, the report could reveal the use of other harsh methods, such as stress positions, nudity, extreme temperatures and sensory deprivation.

“Really, what I’m hoping is that a more detailed account of what torture looks like will just destroy once and for all this Hollywood narrative that torture is somehow brave and heroic, when what it is, is immoral and cowardly,” said Elizabeth Goitein, the co-director of the Brennan Center for Justice’s Liberty and National Security Program.

“I’m hopeful that, when people see that this isn’t Jack Bauer, it will make a difference.”

Did the programs work?

The report is expected to assert that the CIA programs were not effective at gathering information, as critics have long claimed.

“I’m extremely interested to see the supportive evidence with respect to these tactics proving completely ineffective,” Eddington said.

“We know from a lot of previous history that that is true, but any kind of specificity that we can get on that, I think, is going to be very valuable from a public interest standpoint.”

Did the CIA mislead the president and Congress?

The report is expected to assert that the CIA under George Tenet misled much of the country, including Bush and the rest of his administration, about the extent and usefulness of the interrogation techniques.

“I think people will probably be shocked by the degree of cover-up that went on about everything,” said Laura Pitter, senior national security counsel at Human Rights Watch.

Bush has rejected those charges ahead of the report’s release.

“These are patriots, and whatever the report says, if it diminishes their contributions to our country, it is way off base,” Bush said on CNN on Sunday. “These are good people — really good people — and we’re lucky as a nation to have them.”

How hard does the CIA push back?

Current and former spy agency officials have reportedly been planning for months to battle back against the report, and the long-simmering tension is likely to spill into the open on Tuesday.

Many agency officials say they were doing their jobs and performing work that was considered at the time to be legal and necessary to prevent another 9/11.

“There’s great hypocrisy in politicians’ criticism of the CIA’s interrogation program,” former longtime CIA official Jose Rodriguez wrote in a Washington Post op-ed this weekend.

Rodriguez warned that operatives now fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria could be pestered by “the nagging thought that, as they carry out legal, authorized and necessary actions, they may be only a few years away from being criticized and second-guessed by the people who today are urging them onward to the ‘gates of hell.’ ”

Will there be unrest overseas?

Defenders of the spy agency have warned that releasing the report will cause unrest and violence around the world.

At a time when the country is facing off against Islamic militants in the Middle East and when American hostages remain at risk, critics worry that the report could turn more people against the United States.

Former CIA Director Michael Hayden said on CBS that he was “genuinely concerned” that the report could “be used by our enemies to motivate people to attack Americans in American facilities overseas.”

Embassies and military facilities have bolstered their security ahead of the report’s release, with the White House assuring Monday that it was moving to ensure “the proper security precautions are in place.”