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## Hentoff: What interrogation info is the CIA still hiding?

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GHS

Posted Sep 08, 2009 @ 11:33 AM

A fierce debate will long continue to swirl around former CIA Inspector General John Helgerson's long-delayed 2004 report (sprung by an ACLU lawsuit) about at least some of the "enhanced" CIA interrogations. He now says some were apparently designed "solely because they were degrading" (his statement printed in the Aug. 24 Washington Post).

On Aug. 24, the very day the Helgerson report was released (despite strenuous objections by CIA Director Leon Panetta), a military judge at Guantanamo Bay denied access to one of the CIA's former "black sites" by a defense lawyer for an accused 9/11 co-conspirator, Ramzi Bin al Shibh. (Aug. 25, Miami Herald).

His lawyer, Navy Cmdr. Suzanne Lachelier, says it's necessary to learn details of her client's interrogation at that secret CIA prison before he was shipped to Guantanamo Bay. In view of the brutal interrogations disclosed in many previously documented reports about the "black sites," she is trying to determine whether her "high value" client suffers from a permanent psychological disorder that would prevent his being competent to stand trial.

A Guantanamo Bay military judge, Col. Stephen Henley, denied her access to the CIA prison on the national security grounds that classified information might be disclosed on what happened to Ramzi Bin al Shibh there. There has been no objection to that ruling from the Obama administration.

But what "classified" interrogation details could still be hidden there? We now know (New York Times, August 26) that the CIA's "secret interrogation program operated under strict rules... managers, doctors and lawyers not only set the program's parameters but dictated every facet of a detainee's daily routine, monitoring interrogations on an hour-by-hour basis."

If we are to believe this proud declaration by the CIA, it reveals how fastidiously the Bush-Cheney administration executed its policy of "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment" forbidden by the international Convention Against Torture, the Geneva Conventions (both of which we signed), our own torture laws and the Supreme Court's 2006 Hamdan v. Rumsfeld decision.

Should you doubt our torture policy existed, see actual official government documents (including autopsy reports of suspects killed during interrogation) in "Administration of Torture: A Documentary Record from Washington to Abu Ghraib and Beyond" (Columbia University Press, 2007) by the ACLU's Jameel Jaffer and Anrit Singh.

Surely, the CIA has a record of Ramzi Bin al Shibh's stay in one of its "black sites" so that at his so-called trial at Guantanamo, he will have the fundamental due process of our rule of law on whether the CIA made him so unfit he cannot stand trial.

What is the CIA hiding, and not only in this case? Keep in mind that of the 109 pages on the widely discussed CIA Inspector General report, 36 pages were completely blacked out, and 30 more were largely blacked out (ABC News. Aug. 25). Moreover, ABC's Brian Ross and Matthew Cole alarmingly disclose:

"The CIA and the Obama Administration continue to keep secret some of the most shocking allegations involving the spy agency's interrogation program: three deaths and several other detainees whose whereabouts could not be determined, according to a former senior intelligence official who has read the full, unredacted version."

Beyond the inflammatory Helgerson report, there will be much more to come if we ever get a full-scale, bipartisan criminal investigation with subpoena powers, not only of "the black sites" but all the way up the chain of command to the highest-level officials and their lawyers, who have yet to be held at all accountable for the war crimes - and that's what they are in U.S. and international law - committed in our name.

As for the continuing secrecy of the far from self-declared "transparent" Obama administration, little attention has been paid to the former CIA Inspector General's recent statement in the Aug. 24 Washington Post in which he said:

"I am disappointed that the Government did not release even a redacted version of the Recommendations (I made), which described a number of corrective actions that needed to be taken."

Why do Attorney General Eric Holder and President Barack Obama hide these recommendations by the former Inspector General? Because they don't want to act on them?

At the smoldering core of what will inevitably, blazingly erupt is the statement by a then much-respected national veteran of public service in the January/February/March 2008 Washington Monthly:

"We have made clear that there are certain lines Americans will not cross because we respect the dignity of every human being...We are sworn to govern by the rule of law, not by brute force...We cannot simply suspend these beliefs in the name of national security."

"Those who support torture may believe that we can abuse captives in certain select circumstances and still be true to our values. But that is a false compromise. We either believe in the dignity of the individual, the rule of law, and the prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment, or we don't. There is no middle ground."

Startlingly, the definer of these battered American values was Leon Panetta, President Barack Obama's choice to be present director of the CIA!

But Panetta now intensely opposes even Holder's very narrow preliminary investigation of the CIA's "enhanced interrogations." Like the president, Panetta prefers to look forward, as the nonpareil baseball legend Satchel Paige advised: "Don't look back - something might be gaining on you."

It's too late, Mr. President and Mr. CIA Director.

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