

## CONGRESS CAVES IN TO BUSH ON DETAINEE BILL

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President George Bush has repeatedly assured us that the U.S. has not tortured detainees. The fact that Bush has released 14 high level detainees from CIA secret prisons indicates that "alternative interrogation techniques," the new euphemism for torture, were used in these facilities. The fact the CIA agents had refused to continue their interrogations also demonstrates that they were fearful about possible prosecution, from which the new bill protects them as well as everyone in the Bush administration.

In his recent book *The One Percent Solution*, John Suskind reports that Al Qaeda operative Abu Zubaydah, one of the fourteen and known to have mental problems, was water boarded by the CIA. He began talking about all sorts of plots, but not a single one was verified in a huge waste of resources.

Bush claims that Zubaydah gave us the first information about a terrorist named Ramzi bin al Shibh, but members of Congress knew all about him in February, 2002, a month before Zubaydah was captured in Thailand.

We now have hard evidence of suspects being beaten to death as early as February, 2003. The U. S. military announced that an Afghan detainee had died in custody because of a heart attack. When Carlotta Gall of *The New York Times* examined the death certificate, homicide was indicated as the cause of death. The coroner wrote that the man's legs had "basically been pulpified" by constant beatings.

The ACLU has released 44 military autopsy reports that clearly demonstrate cases of death by torture. DOD 003164 is one such example: "[detainee] died as a result of asphyxia due to strangulation. . . . Autopsy revealed bone fracture, rib fractures, contusions in mid abdomen . . . Manner of death is homicide. Whitehorse Detainment Facility, Nasiriyah, Iraq."

Another detainee died under similar circumstances on January 9, 2004 in Al Asad, Iraq. He was asphyxiated and suffered blunt force injuries. Yet another Iraq prisoner died in Navy Seal custody on April 5, 2004 in Mosul, Iraq. The ACLU reported that "he was hooded, fex-cuffed, sleep deprived and subjected to hot and cold environmental conditions, including the use of cold war on his body and hood." He most likely died of hypothermia. No wonder a great majority of Iraqis hate us and want us to get out of their country.

There are many problems with the detainee bill which was rushed through Congress just in time for desperate Republicans to use a No vote as a way to claim that Democrats are soft on terror.

The most terrifying provision of this bill is the denial of habeas corpus to detainees. The basic right for prisoners to appear before a judge and respond to the charges against them goes back to the Magna Carta of 1215. Even when charged, coerced evidence may be used against the detainees. Attorneys for Guantanamo Bay prisoners say that they will take these issue all the way to the Supreme Court. The sad irony is that high level prisoners, with much more presumption of guilt, may get more due process than hundreds of low level detainees, many of whom were not picked upon a battlefield, but turned in by bounty hunters at \$1,000 per head.

The story of three British citizens of Pakistani descent is good example of the type of people caught in this indiscriminate dragnet. The main evidence against them was a blurry photo that purported to show that they attended an Al Qaeda rally in 2000. All three were able to prove that they were in England at the time, and they were eventually released, but many detainees like these remain locked up at Gitmo.

In July, 2003, George Bush declared that "the United States is committed to the worldwide elimination of torture, and we are leading this fight by example. Freedom from torture is an inalienable human right. Yet torture continues to be practiced around the world by rogue regimes, whose cruel methods match their determination to crush the human spirit."

Sadly, the U. S. has not led by example. Instead, it set up torture chambers in all the provinces of South Vietnam in the 1960s, it oversaw the torture of thousands in Latin America, and now there is clear evidence of U. S. torture during the War on Terror. How long will it take for us to restore our good name in the world of civilized nations?