

Torture



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Torture – Talking Points & Takeaways

If we torture, we are basically handing al Qaeda a recruitment budget. Terror attacks in Iraq increased more than tenfold after Abu Ghraib. Torture allows terrorists to promote lies about America and recruit insurgents that kill American servicemembers and citizens. That's why military leaders – such as General David Petraeus – and experienced interrogators oppose torture.

Torture yields false intelligence. Getting good information is like looking for a needle in a haystack. Torture just adds more hay. Detainees will say anything to stop the pain, making up lies that lead us down rabbit holes. That's a distraction from killing and capturing terrorists.

Torture Jeopardizes Our Troops' Safety. The US has hundreds of thousands of troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Torture puts each of those lives at risk every day. If Americans are perceived to torture without qualms, our enemies will have fewer reservations when dealing with American prisoners of war (POWs). And it is our men and women in uniform who will pay the consequences.

To centrist Americans, the national security case against torture is more persuasive than legal or ethical arguments. Anywhere between 35%-50% of the public believes that torture can sometimes be justified against terrorism suspects. To win the support of these Americans – and keep torture off limits – the national security case against torture must take precedence over legal or ethical arguments. People who are persuaded by those arguments are already in our corner.

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Torture is Bad for National Security



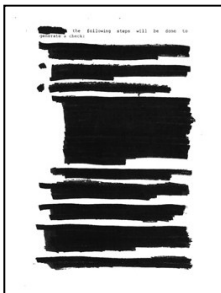
The Executive Order to End Torture. On January 22, 2009, surrounded by 16 retired generals and admirals, President Obama signed an Executive Order “ensuring lawful interrogations.” The presence of prominent military officials highlighted the fact that, in addition to moral and legal issues, torture is also an issue of national security.

“Some may argue that we would be more effective if we sanctioned torture or other expedient methods to obtain information from the enemy. They would be wrong.

Beyond the basic fact that such actions are illegal, history shows that they also are frequently neither useful nor necessary.”

- **General David Petraeus**

Torture Yields False Intelligence



Detainees will say what they believe their interrogators want to hear to stop the torture.

While the goal of “enhanced interrogation” is to gain information that will make Americans safer against future attacks, the reality is that torture often leads to faulty intelligence. **False Intelligence is a distraction from killing and capturing terrorists.**

Is it possible that an individual instance of torture might produce a useful piece of information? Of course. **But since you never know when the information is false, or true, it is useless.**

“No good intelligence is going to come from abusive practices. I think history tells us that. I think the empirical evidence of the last five years, hard years, tells us that.”

- **Lieutenant General John Kimmons, Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence**

Torture Closes Intelligence Leads



Torture Closes Doors to New Information.

Interrogations conducted without torture are successful because they establish trust between interrogator and detainee. **If detainees assume that torture is inevitable, this can force them to shut down and withhold time-sensitive information.** The fact that torture was not used or threatened against the Underwear Bomber or the Times Square Bomber is a major reason why they have cooperated with US interrogators and provided new intelligence leads.

“Prisoner abuse and torture are to be avoided at all costs...because they can degrade the intelligence collection effort by interfering with a killed interrogator’s efforts to establish rapport with the subject.”

- From a Statement signed by 20 former US Army Interrogators

Torture Helps Recruit More Terrorists



Terror Attacks in Iraq Increased nearly 11x after Abu Ghraib. In the year before Abu Ghraib 132 terror attacks took place in Iraq. In the year after that number jumped to 1,450 (NCTC – Worldwide Incidents Tracking System). Torture and its symbols – Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib – create a larger swath of individuals who want to do us harm. It allows terrorists to spread lies and slander America to fence-sitting populations in the Muslim world. The result? More people who want to kill Americans. This hardly makes America safer. **Torture is the Gift that Keeps on Giving to Terrorists.**

“There are serving U.S. flag-rank officers who maintain that the first and second identifiable causes of U.S. combat deaths in Iraq – as judged by their effectiveness in recruiting insurgent fighters into combat – are, respectively the symbols of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo.”

- Former Navy General Counsel Alberto Mora

Torture Jeopardizes Our Troops' Safety



Torture Needlessly Puts Our Troops in Harm's Way.

The US has hundreds of thousands of troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Torture puts each of those lives at risk every day. If Americans are perceived to torture without qualms, our enemies will have fewer reservations when dealing with US prisoners of war (POWs). And it is our men and women in uniform who will pay the consequences. Even terrorists groups as heinous as Hamas know better than to torture their captives. US policy should not give such groups reason to rethink.

"The number of U.S. soldiers who have died because of our torture policy will never be definitively known, but it is fair to say that it is close to the number of lives lost on September 11, 2001. How anyone can say that torture keeps Americans safe is beyond me - unless you don't count American soldiers as Americans."

- Major Matthew Alexander, US Air Force Interrogator

Torture Advocates Hurt America

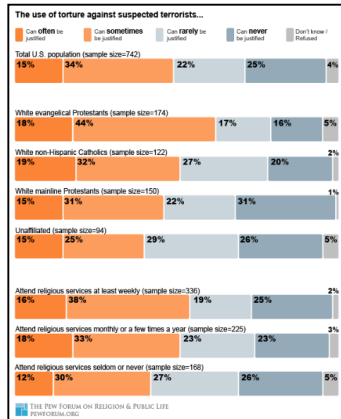


Torture Advocates Are Justifying Their Own Past Decisions.

Most former officials who favor "enhanced interrogation" practices, such as Former Vice President Dick Cheney, played a role in creating and implementing such policies. Their best evidence is hearsay, and they have a stake in justifying their own actions.

Military and Intelligence Leaders believe popular acceptance of torture weakens our military. Brigadier General Pat Finnegan, the Dean of West Point, along with interrogation professionals from other branches of government – including the CIA and FBI – feel so strongly that torture brutalizes our military and weakens their effectiveness they asked the producers of the top TV show "24" to stop depicting torture as effective, because it was harming their ability to train effective interrogators.

US Public is Divided on Torture



When it comes to terrorism, Americans are split on the issue of torture. Polls from the Pew Research Center, the Washington Post/ABC, and the New York Times/CBS reveal that the portion of Americans that feel torture cannot be justified is almost equal to the portion of Americans that believe torture can be justified in extreme circumstances.

With approximately half of the US population opposed to torture for a variety of reasons, the question then becomes: **How do we convince Americans who support torture to change their minds? The answer is national security.**

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Security Tops Morality as Argument Against Torture

The Public Debate on Torture Will Be Won or Lost on National Security. Millions of Americans reluctantly support torture out of an honest desire to keep America safe. Torture is wrong, but it also presents a grave threat to our national security that cannot be ignored.



49% say torture is sometimes or often justified when dealing with terrorism suspects.



48% say there are cases when torture should be used against terrorism suspects.



37% say "aggressive interrogation tactics" should sometimes be used to gain info from terrorism suspects.

Because most Americans who support torture falsely believe it will make us safer, arguments from morality or constitutional principles fail to convince them. We must make the national security case against torture to convince these Americans.

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Good Answers to Tough Questions

How does torture produce bad information? Prisoners will lie to make the pain stop. Take the case of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, who described a false link between Saddam and al Qaeda in order to avoid torture. That's exactly the sort of false "intelligence" that led us into Iraq, distracting us from the real terrorist threat in Afghanistan.

If we don't use torture, how are we going to make hardened terrorists talk? We get good intelligence by using the same confidence-building approach that interrogators have used successfully since WWII. By appealing to a detainee's fears, desires, and motivations an interrogator can earn the detainee's confidence and go back to him for new information. Military interrogators used these methods to locate and kill al Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Why shouldn't we use any means necessary to protect the US? If torture worked, then we'd truly face a moral dilemma about whether it's right to use "any means necessary." But the fact of the matter is that torture doesn't work. Although television and film can lead us to believe otherwise, torture is not some sort of secret weapon that has to be called in when all other methods fail. It's not an effective weapon, because it leads to false information—and with no trust built between interrogator and prisoner, we cannot separate the false from the true.

Good Answers to Tough Questions

By releasing the torture memos, President Obama has told al Qaeda exactly what the US will and will not do. Won't that help them prepare for captivity? Terrorists have been tortured in Middle Eastern prisons for decades – so al Qaeda already knows what torture is and how to prepare for it. What they won't be ready for are American interrogators who use tried-and-true interrogation methods. When they see that America is not some monstrous "Great Satan" that tortures at will, we begin to undermine their entire worldview. And as their ideology erodes, their willingness to open up and trust their interrogators with quality information increases.

Former Vice President Cheney pushed to declassify CIA documents that, he says, prove torture prevented terrorist attacks. Why would he lie about that? He's probably not lying. Much more likely is that he's just wrong. He also believed that Saddam was working with al Qaeda, that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, and that Iraqis would greet us as liberators. Dick Cheney holds his beliefs stronger than facts. Meanwhile, to trust Dick Cheney on the wider issue of torture is to distrust all the military and intelligence officials who have real experience with interrogation. Given Cheney's failed track record, taking his word over theirs just doesn't make sense.

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