

~~SECRET~~*Intelligence in Public Literature***CIA and Interrogations —Today's Debate and the Historical Discussion (U)***Courting Disaster: How the CIA Kept America Safe and How Barack Obama is Inviting the Next Attack*

by Mark Thiessen (Washington: Regnery, 2010). 388 pp, appendices and notes.

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The use of coercion in interrogation is an unsettling subject that has been the topic of numerous emotionally laden treatments. Though not without its flaws, Mark Thiessen's valuable book provides a structured and pointed contribution to much of the debate about CIA's "enhanced interrogation techniques" (EITs), particularly on two key points: first, whether application of these techniques ultimately resulted in useful intelligence that saved lives, and second, the often too-casual equation of the techniques with torture—which exposes CIA officers involved in the program to criminal investigation and potential prosecution. (U)

Courting Disaster is both descriptive and polemical, and the division is reflected in the lengthy subtitle. Thiessen's account of the harsh interrogation methods that were part of the Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program is intended, he says, to illuminate an important, successful, but grossly misrepresented and misunderstood intelligence activity. His narrative—based on an array of knowledgeable sources and publicly available documents¹—in fact, is an *apologia* (in the old meaning of a reasoned defense) of CIA officers in the program who applied enhanced tech-

niques and thereby "kept America safe" by stopping the next 9/11. They are not torturers, Thiessen says, but heroes. (U)

The polemics are the other side of the coin, for Thiessen essentially accuses the current administration of malfeasance by stopping the Detention and Interrogation Program, accusing CIA officers who participated in harsh interrogations of engaging in torture, and raising the possibility of criminal prosecutions. That side of the book will not be treated here. (U)

In broad outline, the history of the EITs, according to Thiessen's account and media reports, runs between August 2002—after the Justice Department authorized, albeit orally, certain coercive interrogation techniques that CIA then used on Abu Zubaydah—and September 2006—when President George W. Bush publicly acknowledged the Detention and Interrogation Program after a media exposé.² During those years, CIA itself suspended the use of the harsh techniques at least twice because Agency leaders were concerned that using them would leave CIA officers vulnerable to prosecution. In both cases, the methods were resumed after CIA received written Jus-

¹ Thiessen, who had been a speechwriter for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and President George W. Bush, writes that his sources included CIA officers who conducted the interrogations, past and present CIA leaders and senior government officials, and documentary evidence such as the Justice Department's released memoranda on authorized interrogation techniques and a redacted report on the program in 2004 by the CIA inspector general. (U)

² Thiessen says he wrote the president's statement after receiving detailed briefings on the program. (U)

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tice Department reassurances that they were legal. (U)

An internal report on the Detention and Interrogation Program by CIA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in 2004 alleged certain abuses, leading to abandonment of the most controversial technique, waterboarding. Director Porter Goss suspended the use of EITs a final time in late 2005 with the expected passage of the McCain Amendment to the Defense Appropriation Bill for FY 2006, which prohibited any "cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment"—a development that Goss said "wholly fails to protect CIA officers and contractors" involved.³ (U//FOUO)

One of President Obama's first acts in January 2009 was to cancel the Detention and Interrogation Program permanently; terror suspects held at the time were transferred to military detention at Guantanamo. In August 2009, the redacted version of the OIG report that Thiessen often cites in this book was released. (U)

The most notorious technique, waterboarding, was applied to only three detainees. A larger set were subjected to other methods that included will-diminishing techniques such as sleep deprivation or prolonged standing, as well as physical methods designed to produce the impression that far worse was coming, such as slamming the detainee into a false (and therefore somewhat elastic) wall or slapping the detainee's abdomen. (U//FOUO)

Vocal opponents of these methods—including members of Congress, the American Civil Liberties Union, human rights and other activists, and journalists—insist that all these approaches, or even any one of them, never produced good intelligence, constituted torture, and therefore were not only unjustifiable but must be prosecuted. Thiessen, however, basing his case on the testimony of his sources,

argues that the techniques were not torture, that they were conducted responsibly in the overall detention program, and that they yielded invaluable intelligence. (U)

The debate has intensified since the publication of *Courting Disaster*, with the two sides represented by Thiessen on the one hand and journalist Jane Mayer on the other. Mayer is famous for her powerful critique of the Bush administration's prosecution of the war on terror, *The Dark Side* (2008).⁴ Mayer's response to Thiessen's book was a lengthy book review in the *New Yorker* (29 March 2010), to which Thiessen replied with a point-by-point rebuttal (NationalReview.com, 14 April 2010). So who is right? (U)

CIA officers presumably will want to side with Thiessen for the same reason most wanted to believe that Tim Weiner's so-called history of CIA was flawed, because doing otherwise would call into question the nature of the organization they work for.⁵ Getting past institutional bias and self-interest in wanting to believe Thiessen, it helps that his arguments about the interrogation methods and the detention program generally are well-reasoned (again, notwithstanding the polemics against the current administration). Even those who are not persuaded will be challenged by points that deserve consideration. (U)

Thiessen says it is a fundamental misconception that the use of the methods contravened the Geneva Conventions. Human rights activists charged the Bush administration with "trying to redefine the Geneva Conventions."⁶ Thiessen points out that the conventions were intended to shield civilian populations by offering certain protections to combatants who followed the laws of war and by denying those protections to those who did not. (29) Giving terrorists Geneva protections, Thiessen asserts, actually undermines the purpose of the conventions. (U)

³ Goss memorandum for the Director of National Intelligence, 16 December 2005 [redacted] (U)

⁴ Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned Into a War on American Ideals* (New York: Doubleday, 2008). (U)

⁵ Weiner's book was seriously flawed: see my review in *Studies in Intelligence* 51, no. 3 (September 2007). (U)

⁶ Evan Thomas, "'24' Versus the Real World," *Newsweek*, 20 September 2006. (U)

Another misconception unfortunately comes from the fact that the harsh approaches to interrogation were called interrogation techniques. According to Thiessen, the methods themselves were never intended to elicit information but rather to overcome the detainee's resistance and to bring him to the point at which he would willingly cooperate. Once the detainee was willing to talk, Thiessen reports (45–48), the team employing the methods would leave and a completely different people would begin questioning or “debriefing.” From that point on coercive methods were not employed—unless the detainee stopped talking. (U)

A third misconception is that no good intelligence resulted because detainees would say anything to stop the techniques, and therefore use of the techniques was completely unjustified. Thiessen makes a compelling case against those who hold this position. He offers the case of Abu Zubaydah (83). At first, thinking CIA knew more than it did, Zubaydah freely gave information that led to the capture of Khālid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), the 9/11 strategist. Some coercive techniques were applied when Zubaydah resisted giving up more, and he was brought to a state of cooperation in which he provided information that led to Jose Padilla and his plot to blow up apartment buildings on KSM's orders as well as information on future al-Qa'ida targets in the United States. Zubaydah then again stopped talking, so waterboarding was applied, resulting in information that led to Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who had been planning to hijack airliners to be crashed into Heathrow Airport and London. (U)

Even more productive, Thiessen shows, was the application of coercive methods, especially waterboarding, to KSM (89–90). When captured in 2003, KSM refused to talk, asked for his lawyer, and responded to questions about planned attacks by saying, “Soon you will know.” Once his cooperation was achieved, KSM gave critical intelligence that led to the capture of other major terrorists and to the dis-

ruption of plots, for example, to fly an airliner into the Library Tower in Los Angeles and to bomb the US consulate and Western residences in Karachi. (U)

Thiessen also cites or quotes (10–11) from many senior intelligence authorities—career and appointed, from both political parties—who have stated that the use of harsh techniques provided valuable intelligence: CIA Directors George Tenet, Porter Goss, Michael Hayden, and Leon Panetta; and Directors of National Intelligence John Negroponte, Mike McConnell, and Dennis Blair. Even John Brennan, the former senior CIA official who serves as this administration's top intelligence adviser, said the United States would be “handicapped” without these techniques. Thiessen also cites the OIG report (111–13) as affirming the value of the intelligence received from those to whom EITs were applied, including the three detainees who were waterboarded. (U)

Director Goss in 2005 requested an independent review of the Detention and Interrogation Program's effectiveness from two non-Agency national security experts, former Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre and congressional staffer Gardner Peckham. Both men independently concluded that the program provided valuable intelligence and was well regulated (114–16). Peckham praised the program for operating under “strict guidelines” in a “carefully choreographed” approach that yielded more than half the HUMINT collected against al-Qa'ida and that disrupted numerous plots. “In short,” Peckham told Thiessen, “the absence of this program would be a setback of disastrous proportions in the war on terrorism.”⁷ (U)

When the Detention and Interrogation Program was canceled in January 2009, Hayden (still the CIA director for a few days) called the White House and said, “You didn't ask, but this is the CIA officially non-concurring.” Even though the most aggressive (and controversial) interrogation technique, waterboarding, had

⁷ The Peckham and Hamre reports to DCI Goss [redacted] This documentary evidence is consistent with Thiessen's account of the reports, which he apparently had not seen, and his interview with Peckham. Hamre declined to be interviewed for the book. (U//FOUO)

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not been conducted for more than three years before Hayden had become director, he considered the overall program valuable and did not want it cancelled. Hayden has since clarified his view on the efficacy of the program's interrogation techniques in these pages.⁸

The point I would make to folks who say, "I don't want you doing this, and it doesn't work anyway," [is] "Whoa. Stop. The front half of that sentence, you can say, "I don't want you doing that." But the back half of that sentence is not yours. That's mine. And the fact is it did work.

Hayden has made this point in several opinion articles and in interviews since stepping down as CIA director. After Thiessen's book appeared, he wrote that Thiessen should not have been able to write it "for reasons of security and classification.... But I'm glad he did." Hayden praised the book as a factual "must read" that illuminates that "this program was carried out by real people, acting out of duty, not enthusiasm."⁹ (U)

Thiessen includes declassified CIA analyses in a lengthy appendix (409–37) to underscore the value of the intelligence gained through the use of EITs. (U)

No matter how efficacious the Detention and Interrogation Program might have been, the morality of the methods it used matters, and not just for political purposes or institutional viability. CIA officers want to know—and I think need to know—that we are the "good guys," that our overall cause is just, and that our mission and methods generally are moral, notwithstanding the occasional lapses in our history (e.g., drug testing on unwitting individuals). (U)

To answer critics of the techniques who compare CIA officers to inquisitors of the Spanish Inquisition, the Khmer Rouge, and the Japa-

nese military during World War II, Thiessen shows that the waterboarding conducted by CIA was a completely different activity than the true water torture inflicted by those other groups, the descriptions of which make for unpleasant reading (chapter four *passim*).¹⁰ Here Thiessen raises the question about what "real" torture is. People with some historical knowledge, may well consider torture something quite beyond physical discomfort or even moderate pain, the province of the medieval iron maiden, the rack, the wheel, the branding iron, the Judas chair, thumbscrews, rectal pears, breast rippers, and other mutilating and horrific devices.¹¹ More recently, an al-Qa'ida interrogation and torture manual found in Iraq in 2007 shows how to use blow torches, electric drills, head vises, and meat cleavers allegedly to elicit information but, one suspects, simply to torture and kill people.¹² When one contemplates the horror of such acts, it simply might be the case that CIA officers considered the prospect of getting a detainee to talk using far less drastic methods quite tame. (U)

Thiessen relates the story of journalist Christopher Hitchens, who in 2008 asked to be waterboarded by Army Special Forces so he could see what it was like before writing about it. The waterboarding was duly conducted by specialists in SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape) training—the model used by CIA. Hitchens found the experience panic-inducing and proclaimed it "torture." Interestingly, because in his own mind he had not lasted long enough, he asked to be waterboarded again to see whether he could improve his record. Thiessen asks, What kind of person requests to be tortured and then asks for it again? His answer is that Hitchens actually demonstrated that the procedure cannot be considered torture. (U)

Thiessen also cites Department of Justice's figures that 26,829 US military personnel were

⁸ Mark Mansfield, "A Conversation with Former CIA Director Michael Hayden," *Studies in Intelligence* 54, no 2. (June 2010): 67. (U)

⁹ Michael Hayden on DailyCaller.com, 15 February 2010. (U)

¹⁰ A typical equation of CIA's program with 20th-century war crimes is the *Boston Globe's* editorial, "The CIA's criminal admission," 7 February 2008. (U)

¹¹ See Robert Held, *Inquisition: Torture Instruments from the Middle Ages to the Industrial Era* (Florence: Qua d'Arno, 1985). (U)

¹² <http://thesmokinggun.com/documents/crime/torture-al-qaeda-style> (U)

waterboarded as part of SERE training from 1992 to 2001 and asks, Can it be contemplated that we torture our own troops? There is, he points out, no "training exemption" for torture in US law. Legal experts say torture requires intent to cause severe pain or suffering, a point made by Attorney General Holder in 2009 when asked to explain why waterboarding US troops in training was not torture (164). Thiessen concludes that—as a matter of law, experience, and common sense—waterboarding as conducted by US Special Forces or CIA does not constitute torture. Tough, Thiessen says, definitely "tough, but not torture." (U)

Thiessen also wonders (216–27) why, if waterboarding were torture, Congress would not have outlawed it. He suspects Congress is afraid of taking a stand for which it would be blamed after another devastating terrorist attack. He also disputes that the Obama administration has made a moral progression in preferring to kill or repatriate terrorists rather than interrogate them, and he argues against the idea that waterboarding and other harsh techniques serve to help al-Qa'ida's recruiting, pointing out that CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program came after 9/11, the embassy bombings in Africa, the USS *Cole* attack, and the first World Trade Center bombing. The evidence indicates that successful terrorist attacks, not waterboarding, win recruits for al-Qa'ida. (U)

Were there abuses? Yes. According to CIA Inspector General John Helgerson, one detainee was threatened inappropriately by a CIA debriefer (i.e. not an individual responsible for EITs). That abuse was reported, investigated, and referred to the Department of Justice, which declined to prosecute; the individual was administratively disciplined and resigned from the Agency. An even more egregious incident—a CIA contractor's beating of a detainee who later died—happened outside the Detention and Interrogation Program, which contained controls and procedures designed

specifically to prevent such abuses.¹³ Nonetheless, there was a third case of the inadvertent freezing to death of a detainee in Afghanistan (Thiessen errs here in saying this case occurred outside the Detention and Interrogation Program, though it was very early in the program and the result of negligence). Investigation of a fourth case, involving the death of an Iraqi detainee who had been beaten in US military custody, found no CIA culpability. These four are tragic cases, to be sure, but three were outside the program and cannot be used, as many do, to disparage that program, and the other, the unfortunate result of inattention to detention conditions, was an anomaly. (U)

Thiessen also rejects the charge that CIA "excessively" waterboarded Khalid Sheikh Mohammed by subjecting him to the procedure 183 times, the OIG report defined a waterboard application to constitute "each discrete instance in which water was applied for any period of time during a session." Since each waterboarding session would involve as many as six applications of water lasting from 20 to 40 seconds, a more accurate count of KSM's waterboarding session would be in the 30s. Thiessen notes that KSM, the mastermind of 9/11 and the butcherer of Daniel Pearl, was very tough and that he could shut off the waterboarding at any time just by talking, which he eventually did after a total, in all those sessions, of just 12 minutes of water application. (U)

The value of Thiessen's book is that it brings facts and an understanding of the challenges and pressures faced by CIA officers to the discussion. Even so, there are problems with Thiessen's account that prevent an uncritical embrace of all its findings and that suggest reasons to be less than confident that he has the full story. When I read the 2004 IG report¹⁴ (the redacted version, since the original remains compartmented), I found some troubling aspects of the program that Thiessen doesn't mention or downplays. (U//FOUO)

¹³ This case was also referred to the Justice Department and the individual involved was prosecuted, convicted, and jailed. (U)

¹⁴ The redacted version of the CIA Inspector General's 2004 report is available on many websites like this one: <http://washington-independent.com/56175/the-2004-cia-inspector-generals-report-on-torture> (U)

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Thiessen's portrayal of CIA officers who applied EITs to detainees is favorably one-sided—implying they all supported all aspects of the Detention and Interrogation Program—but the CIA inspector general undertook the investigation that led to the May 2004 report as a result of a request from the National Clandestine Service, together with expressions of concern *by employees involved in the program* as early as January 2003 that the interrogation techniques were going too far. After interviewing more than 100 persons and reviewing more than 38,000 documents, the OIG concluded that “there were few instances of deviations from approved procedures” but that early in the program “there were instances of improvisation and other undocumented interrogation techniques.” CIA interrogators were new and untrained—the Agency's established cadre of professional interrogators had left after the Vietnam War—and CIA did not begin training the new ones until November 2002. ¹⁵ (U//FOUO)

With regard to waterboarding, the OIG concluded—after its review of the famous videotapes that are now destroyed—that CIA interrogators in one location, contrary to what Thiessen asserts (129), used more water than that used by SERE instructors. The OIG also found that waterboarding was conducted in a frequency of applications inconsistent with Justice Department guidelines that repetition of EITs “not be substantial”—a conclusion with which CIA's Office of General Counsel disagreed. The OIG report also documents unauthorized techniques, like the use of a stiff brush to produce abrasions and the use of pressure points to induce unconsciousness, although these appear to have been isolated incidents. ¹⁶ One can doubt whether these abuses individually or even collectively rise to the level of tor-

ture—and could argue that they are the sort of anomalies that almost always occur in complex programs carried out in wartime—but the question cannot be ducked. (U//FOUO)

Herein lies a cautionary tale for all CIA employees. CIA personnel throughout the Agency's history have often found themselves doing things they believed were right and were told were right in the pursuit of national security but for which they later found themselves criticized—if not in a court of law, then in the court of public opinion. The conclusion of Gardner Peckham's investigatory report to Porter Goss in 2005 spells out the dilemma for CIA officers:

One gets the sense that there is great pride felt by those who built and participate in the program. They know they are doing important work that is producing enormously useful results. It is clear that in some respects, it is grim work, and no one with whom we met seems to take joy in it. In fact...eagerness to participate in EITs by applicants for [these] jobs is an immediate disqualifier. But, there is also a deep concern expressed...that as the events of 9/11 recede into the past, they may be held accountable to a changing standard of behavior. As memories of thousands of innocent lives being snuffed out by terrorists grows dimmer with time, they wonder how the future will judge them and their actions. (U//FOUO)

For the present, the facts presented by Thiessen's book and other evidence like the OIG report suggest the judgment of history will be that those involved in the Detention and Interrogation Program, even those few who applied enhanced interrogation techniques, were not torturers—and if not heroes, then at least honorable defenders of our country. (U)

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Interrogation in CIA's History (U)

After CIA's use of enhanced interrogation

techniques was revealed in 2006, numerous writers asserted the Agency had never dealt with coercive interrogation before and there-

¹⁵ OIG report, 5–6, 25 (U)

¹⁶ Ibid, 37, 44, 69–70. (U)

fore didn't know what it was doing. Jane Mayer writing in the *New Yorker* said: "What you need to know is that the CIA had no experience really in interrogating prisoners. They had never really held prisoners before. And so, they really had no idea how to go about getting information out of people."¹⁷ (U)

Some commentators—bloggers, mostly—assumed in the absence of evidence that CIA was unrestrained in its conduct of such techniques and even gleeful about it. Even Evan Thomas of *Newsweek* said the Agency had little experience but was "gung ho" for coercive interrogations.¹⁸ CIA, in other words, was portrayed as a small child tasting ice cream for the first time—not knowing what it was but liking it very much. (U)

This was a caricature, more revealing of anti-Agency bias than reflective of history. The actual Agency experience regarding interrogation goes back more than 50 years, and that record makes clear two things: first, that coercive methods have always been considered effective to some degree; second, that they have to be used carefully and not devolve into torture. (U)

In CIA's infancy, little thought was given to the issue of coercive methods in interrogation, other than to assume that such methods would work. New officers in 1951, for example, were assured during their operational training that, if they were to fall into the hands of communist forces, they would eventually talk.¹⁹ Like-

wise, an [redacted] medical study on interrogation from 1953 found that, though "high morale and firm discipline" are the best defenses against coercive interrogation, "everyone has his breaking point."²⁰ Among the techniques thought to work to bring the individual to this "breaking point" were exhaustion and sleep deprivation, the administration of pain or drugs, and creation of a feeling of isolation or abandonment—all considered part of the repertory of communist security services.²¹ (S)

To validate agents or to collect information from less-than-willing subjects, CIA in its first decade found itself in the interrogation business and thinking and writing about it in sophisticated ways.²² A 1958 *Studies in Intelligence* article that purported to reflect the collective state of the art said "An interrogation yields the highest intelligence dividend when the interrogee [sic] finally becomes an ally, actively cooperating with the interrogator to produce the information desired." Torture must not be used, the article said, not only for moral and legal reasons but because it risks producing bad information and rendering the subject unfit for further use. But the article also made it clear that "intensive" interrogation occasionally was needed, a "softening up process" intended to "break" the detainee's will, but not by crossing the line into physical abuse or torture. "The recalcitrant subject of an intelligence interrogation must be 'broken,' but broken for use like a riding horse, not smashed in the search for a single golden egg."²³ (S)

¹⁷ Jane Meyer interview on the *Democracy Now!* program, 18 July 2008, at http://www.democracynow.org/2008/7/18/the_dark_side_jane_mayer_on (U)

¹⁸ Evan Thomas. (U)

¹⁹ This is the testimony of paramilitary officers John Downey and Richard Fecteau, who were captured by the Chinese communists in 1952. See Nicholas Dujmovic, "Extraordinary Fidelity: Two CIA Prisoners in China, 1952-1973," *Studies in Intelligence* 50, no. 4 (2006): 21-36. (U)

²⁰ Report of Ad Hoc Medical Study Group, 15 January 1953, Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS) no. CK3100398426. (U)

²¹ Other [redacted] 1950s-era documents that indicate a belief in the efficacy of coercive methods include "Interrogation Guide for Individuals Who Have Been Held by the Soviets or Their Satellites," 29 May 1953, DDS no. CK3100398453. [redacted]

[redacted] Because the use of drugs, hypnosis, and the polygraph in interrogations constitute a parallel but separate history from the use of physical and mental coercion, they are not addressed here. (U)

²² CIA's reflection on interrogation mirrored a parallel public treatment of the subject—no doubt sparked by interest in interrogative methods in the aftermath of the Korean War and communist show trials—in specialized journals; see for example, *The Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 33 (September 1957). (U)

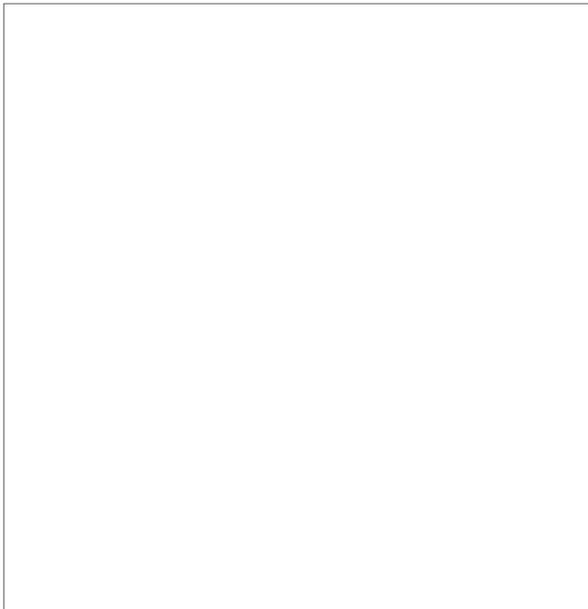
²³ Don Compos [pseud.], "The Interrogation of Suspects Under Arrest," *Studies in Intelligence* 2, no. 3 (Summer 1958): 51-61. (U)

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CIA's leading interrogators, with their practical experience, agreed in subsequent *Studies* articles. [redacted] writing in 1960 on the interrogation of defectors, emphasized the need, when conducting an "unfriendly interrogation," to use the gamut of methods "from mildly unpleasant ones to measures just short of violence"—but not to cross that line. Approved "psychological pressures" included isolation, irregular sleep schedules, uncomfortable temperatures, minimal sustenance, and "jostling without actual physical harm." Career interrogator [redacted] writing just a few years later, acknowledged the occasional need for threats and confrontation under strict controls in a contrived, almost theatrical setting, but recommended against violence, which "correctly applied, often gets crude results quickly" because it "lowers the moral caliber of the organization employing it and soon corrupts the interrogation staff."²⁴ (S)

The evidence suggests CIA took this admonition against physical abuse seriously. In 1960, a CIA employee beat a Soviet bloc defector undergoing interrogation, and DCI Allen Dulles summarily dismissed him.²⁵ When coercive methods needed to be used, the strictest control was the norm. In 1963, the Counterintelligence Staff prepared an interrogation manual to provide guidelines, particularly for "resistant sources," that included a section on coercive methods that is not very specific about what procedures work but rather provides an almost academic discussion of the pros and cons of their use in general. Most of the discussion concerns psychological stresses, such as the arrest itself, with only a short general discussion on the infliction of pain that empha-

sizes its potential to be counterproductive. Most interesting is the warning that no CIA interrogator can unilaterally use any form of coercion and that prior approval must be obtained from the CIA director.²⁶ (S)



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During the Agency's experience in Vietnam, CIA officers repudiated physical coercion in interrogation on practical and moral grounds. South Vietnamese authorities, aware of the Americans' antipathy to mistreatment or torture, strove to hide from them what was an endemic practice that included electric shock, beatings, and starvation. Vietnamese communists who went from South Vietnamese to CIA custody went from brutal to noncoercive, but nonetheless skillful, interrogators who often extracted better information.²⁸ (S)

²⁴ Stanley Farndon [pseud.], "The Interrogation of Defectors," *Studies in Intelligence* 4 (Summer 1960): 9-30. C.N. Geschwind [pseud.], "Counterintelligence Interrogation," *Studies in Intelligence* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1965): 23-38. (U)

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²⁵ This incident was related to the Rockefeller Commission by former Director Richard Helms in 1975; E.H. Knoche memorandum for Director William Colby, [redacted] (S)

²⁶ "KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation," July 1963, [redacted] This manual was obtained by the *Baltimore Sun* through the Freedom of Information Act in 1997. (U)

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²⁷ [redacted]
[redacted] (U)

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²⁸ Thomas Ahern, *CIA and Rural Pacification in South Vietnam* (Washington: CIA History Staff, 2001), 283-85. Merle Pribbenow, "Limits to Interrogation: The Man in the Snow White Cell," *Studies in Intelligence* 48, no. 1 (2004): 59-69. (U)

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Soviet defector Yuri Nosenko was on the receiving end of coercive techniques while in extrajudicial CIA solitary confinement between April 1964 and October 1967. CIA personnel hoped to "break" Nosenko to reveal that he was a dispatched agent, not a genuine defector. Most of the effort to "break" Nosenko manifested itself in his spartan living conditions—he was isolated, subjected to temperature extremes and constant light, and denied basic comforts, reading materials, and cigarettes. Nosenko lost between 20 and 30 pounds on a severely reduced diet. Questioning was intense but involved solely psychological pressure: the interrogators verbally assaulted Nosenko, yelling at him, calling him a liar, ridiculing him, and threatening him with unending imprisonment. The interrogations also were sporadic. One coercive technique, oddly enough, was *not* to interrogate him for long stretches of time, even months. Contrary to the fictional portrayal of Nosenko's interrogation in the 2006 film *The Good Shepherd*, no physical methods were used, nor were drugs administered.²⁹ In the end, Nosenko remained "unbroken," and CIA came to believe his story.³⁰ (S)

When CIA officers John Downey and Richard Fecteau were finally released from two decades of Chinese captivity in the early 1970s, CIA at last learned from their debriefings what they had experienced in the early years of their incarceration: solitary confinement with sensory deprivation, lack of sleep, and repeated, often threatening interrogations.³¹ Both men had talked as a result of these coercive methods, and their experience was subsequently used in Agency training courses. (U)

What is interesting in the internal CIA documentation about Downey and Fecteau is that, though the Agency described their treatment as "harsh," not once was it described as "torture." One may conclude, albeit from an

absence of evidence, that these coercive methods simply did not qualify, in the minds of CIA officers, as torture. This is consistent with an early CIA "interrogation guide" for questioning individuals who had been in communist captivity, in which a distinction is made between "torture" (defined as physical abuse) on the one hand, and the enduring of loud or continuous sounds, constant bright light, dietary manipulation, sleep deprivation, prolonged standing, or extreme hot or cold temperatures on the other.³² (U)

But that does not mean that all methods short of physical abuse would be approved in CIA's experience.

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So, contrary to Jane Mayer, Evan Thomas, and others, at the time of the 9/11 attacks CIA actually had a great deal of institutional experience with coercive methods, considered coercion efficacious in producing reliable information, recognized and enforced limits beyond which interrogators should not go, and imposed accountability for violations. (U)

Historical knowledge is hardly ever harmful. This context might have been useful for CIA interrogators after 9/11 who, because of the threat of imminent follow-on attacks, sought methods that not only produced reliable information but did so quickly. It might also have comforted them to know they were not the first to face the challenges. (S)



²⁹ See the CIA History Staff critique of the film in *Studies in Intelligence* 51, no. 1 (March 2007). (U)

³⁰ A detailed but lurid account of the Nosenko affair is Tom Mangold, *Cold Warrior* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), chapters 12 and 13. Nosenko's interrogation records and results [Redacted]. (S)

³¹ Dujmovic, "Extraordinary Fidelity." (U)

³² See "Interrogation Guide." (U)

³³ [Redacted] (S)

(b)(3)

(b)(3)