

## The CIA's Enhanced Interrogation Techniques: How they began and where they were performed

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### INFORMACIÓN ART.

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### ABSTRACT

Enhanced Interrogation Techniques (EITs) are methods of exploitation towards interogatees developed by psychologists under contract to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), implemented in secret prisons (black sites) built and run by the agency outside US territory during the “war on terrorism” that the USA triggered after being targeted with terrorist attacks against New York and Washington on September 11th, 2001. This paper reviews some antecedents of and the context surrounding these counterterrorist methods, focusing on how and where they were carried out, using three black sites as examples: the first one to open, one with the most controversial reputation, and the other operating in Europe, in addition to some incidents that occurred in each of them. The EITs appear to be the latest episode in a string of CIA interrogation practices which have applied scientific psychology.

### Las técnicas de interrogatorio intensificado de la CIA: cómo se iniciaron y dónde fueron utilizadas

### RESUMEN

Las técnicas de interrogatorio intensificado (TIIs) son métodos de explotación de sospechosos desarrollados por psicólogos contratados por la Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), que fueron implementados en prisiones secretas construidas y operadas por la agencia fuera del territorio de EEUU, durante la “guerra contra el terrorismo” desencadenada por este país después de haber sido objeto de atentados terroristas en Nueva York y Washington el 11 de septiembre de 2001. Este artículo revisa algunos antecedentes y el contexto de estos procedimientos antiterroristas, centrándose en cómo y dónde fueron empleados, usando tres prisiones secretas como ejemplos: la primera en utilizarse, la que alcanzó la peor reputación y una de las implementadas en Europa, además de algunos incidentes que ocurrieron en cada una de ellas. Las TIIs parecen el último episodio de una serie de prácticas de interrogatorio de la CIA en las que se ha aplicado la psicología científica.

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### The CIA's Enhanced Interrogation Techniques: How they began and where they were performed

In 1945, United States (US) President Harry Truman abolished the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the US clandestine intelligence agency that was founded by General William J. Donovan in 1942, following the orders of President Franklin D. Roosevelt<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, two years later Truman signed the National Security Act, which created the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). That law, written in part by Allen Dulles, a former OSS officer and future director of the agency, authorizes the CIA to carry out “functions and duties related to intelligence affecting national security,” and to use “all appropriate methods” in that mission (Kinzer, 2019, p. 32).

On September 17<sup>th</sup> 2001, six days after the terrorist attacks against New York and Washington (henceforth, the 9/11 attacks), US President George W. Bush signed the Memorandum of Notification (MoN) to authorize the Director of CIA, George Tenet, to “undertake operations designed to capture and detain persons who pose a continuing, serious threat of violence or death to U.S. persons and interests or who are planning terrorist activities” (US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence [SSCI], 2014, p. 11). Although previously the CIA had received limited authorizations to hold certain individuals in custody while waiting to be formally charged, the MoN provided the CIA with an unprecedented discretionary authorization to determine who would be detained, the factual basis for the detention and its duration (SSCI, 2014). On February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002, President Bush issued a memorandum establishing that neither Taliban detainees, nor those of al-Qaeda met the requirements as war prisoners according to the Geneva Convention, and that its III Common Article, which demanded humane treatment of individuals in conflict, did not apply to those detainees<sup>2</sup> (SSCI, 2014).

#### Antecedents

At the start of the Cold War in the late 1940s, European communist states held *show trials* with confessions by several Christian clergymen, which raised concerns that the Soviets had learned how to control the human mind, leading to the US Administration's decision to acquire the same knowledge (Kinzer, 2019; McCoy, 2012).

In 1949, a team from the CIA's Office of Security performed experiments on drugs and hypnosis, evaluating unconventional interrogation techniques under a project called *Bluebird*, which was adapted and rebranded in 1951 as *Project Artichoke*. Then, in 1954, it became even more thorough and was re-dubbed *MK-Ultra* (McCoy,

2012), an outfit which facilitated the transfer of millions of dollars to 149 research projects divided up among 44 universities and colleges, 15 research centers, 12 hospitals, 3 prisons and several pharmaceutical companies (Blackwell, 2014). One likely recipient of these grants was José Manuel Rodríguez Delgado, a neurosurgeon and professor at Yale, for his research on the stimulation of brain electrode implants, thanks to the Office of Naval Research (the ONR, a CIA conduit for covert funding [McCoy, 2006]) from at least 1954 to 1960 (Ross, 2006).

At this time, in the first few years of the 1950s, McGill University psychologist Donald Hebb received a grant from the Canadian Defense Research Board (CDRB) to study the effects of sensory deprivation (McCoy, 2006). Hebb's team's research on this matter would serve as the basis for the development of interrogation techniques at the CIA and other security agencies, and as the reference for more than 230 scientific articles published in the following seven years after the first Hebb group's publications (McCoy, 2006, 2012). One of these articles was published by the McGill psychiatrist Ewen Cameron, who reported having used an adaptation of Hebb's sensory deprivation paradigm, while applying a procedure he called *psychic driving*, consisting of exposing the subject to the repetition (by means of a tape recorder) of sentences judged as to be relevant for him/her, whose effects he compared with “the breakdown of the individual under continuous interrogation” (Cameron, 1956, p. 508). His research was also funded by the CIA (*MK-Ultra Subproject 68*; [McCoy, 2006; Ross, 2006]).

In July of 1963, the CIA produced the *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation* (KUBARK is the CIA's cryptonym for itself), a manual destined for use in the Cold War. Uncovered in 1997 via the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA: USA law that allows access to information held by public authorities) by the *Baltimore Sun* journalists Cary Cohn, Ginger Thompson, and Mark Matthews (Bowden, 2003), the book included “[T]he principal coercive techniques of interrogation: arrest, detention, deprivation of sensory stimuli through solitary confinement or similar methods, threats and fear, debility, pain, heightened suggestibility and hypnosis, narcosis, and induced regression.” (*Kubark*, 1963, p. 85).

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964, a KGB officer, Yuriy Ivanovich Nosenko, defected to the CIA, after meeting a representative in Geneva (Switzerland) and was brought to the USA on February 12<sup>th</sup> (CIA “Family Jewels”<sup>3</sup> Memorandum, 1973 [CIA, 1973]). After initial interrogation, he was moved to a safe house in Clinton (Maryland), where he was confined and interrogated from April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964, until August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1965 (CIA, 1973). The CIA officers in charge of his custody believed that he was a dispatched agent and ordered his confinement (from August 1965 until October 1967) to a specially constructed “jail” with only a cot, where he was administered several methods of *Kubark* including sensory deprivation and forced standing (SSCI, 2014). After the period of hostile interrogation and confinement, the CIA was unable to prove their suspicions and Nosenko was moved to more comfortable surroundings, eventually being released (CIA, 1973).

<sup>1</sup> Previously, Roosevelt had sent Donovan to the Tavistock Institute in London on behalf of US Intelligence where British Intelligence offered him advice in a collaboration that the institute would later provide to them again (specifically to the CIA) to create Project Bluebird (Estulin, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> In an interview to John C. Yoo, the deputy assistant attorney general at the time, recorded by Jane Mayer (2005a), he compared Taliban and al-Qaeda terrorists, considered to be “illegal combatants”, with pirates (fighting on behalf of no nation) and with slave traders, who were so evil that they have never historically been recognized by law. The point, he said, was that the Geneva Conventions' “simple binary classification of civilian or soldier isn't accurate”.

<sup>3</sup> Name given to the information source (a thick loose-leaf book of 693 pages) composed of the responses that CIA officers had sent to the director of central intelligence, James Schlesinger, after he had ordered them, on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1973, to report illegal acts (i.e., anything that might have been considered to be outside the legislative charter of the agency) that they had committed or were aware of (Kinzer, 2019).

## Preamble

Since the release date of the MoN until early 2002, there had been no indications in CIA records that the agency had conducted any significant research to identify effective interrogation practices, such as a review of the CIA's past use of coercive interrogation techniques (SSCI, 2014). The only research documented in CIA records during this time on the issue of interrogation was the preparation of a report<sup>4</sup> on an al-Qaeda manual assessed by the CIA in order to learn about the strategies used to resist interrogation, commissioned by the CIA's Office of Technical Services (OTS), and drafted by two CIA contractors, doctors Grayson Swigert and Hammond Dunbar (SSCI, 2014). These were codenames used in the SSCI (2014) for the American psychologists James E. Mitchell and John "Bruce" Jessen, respectively, who would receive \$80 million from the CIA via their company *Mitchell Jessen & Associates* for their services (Lima, 2020; Raphael et al., 2019; Windrem, 2014). The company was co-owned by seven associates, six of whom had worked on the SERE program, and in 2006 had a base contract with the CIA that, if fulfilled, would be worth \$180 million (Windrem, 2014). In January 2009, President Obama prohibited the use of other interrogation techniques except for those included in the US Army Field Manual. A few months later, the CIA ended its contract with Mitchell Jessen & Associates (Hoffman et al., 2015).

Both "Swigert" and "Dunbar" had been psychologists with the U.S. Air Force *Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape* (SERE) school, which exposed select U.S. military personnel to coercive interrogation techniques, as well as other ones, that they might be subjected to if taken hostage in countries that did not respect the Geneva Convention (SSCI, 2014). Neither of the two psychologists had been interrogators before, nor did they have specialized knowledge of al-Qaeda or terrorism, or any relevant regional, cultural, or linguistic skills (SSCI, 2014)<sup>5</sup>. "Swigert" had reviewed research on "learned helplessness," in which individuals might become passive and depressed in response to adverse uncontrollable events. He hypothesized that provoking this state could make a detainee be cooperative and reveal information (SSCI, 2014, p. 21). Indeed, according to Steve Kleinman, a reserve Air Force colonel and interrogator who had known Mitchell ("Swigert") professionally for years, "learned helplessness was his whole paradigm", which involved performing a routine that began by isolating prisoners and developed by removing any possibility of their being able to predict what they would or wouldn't be allowed to do or experience

(e.g., when their next meal would be), in order to create feelings of anxiety and dependency (Mayer, 2007).

## Black Sites

The extraordinary rendition is a practice in which suspected terrorists are sent to countries known to employ torture in order to be interrogated without legal restrictions. For the CIA, this practice reportedly has an antecedent in the early 1950s with what was known as the "Lyle O. Kelly case", referring to a 29-year-old Bulgarian whose real name was Dimitre Dimitrov, the leader of a small political party based in Greece in the name of Bulgarian independence (Kaye & Albarelli, 2010). Although he had, allegedly, initially collaborated with the CIA, operatives of the agency discovered that he was considering becoming a double agent for the French Intelligence Service, inducing Dimitrov to become imprisoned in Greece, where he was interrogated and tortured (Kaye & Albarelli, 2010). Six months later, the Greek authorities returned Dimitrov to the CIA, who flew him to a secret interrogation center at Ford Clayton in Panama, where he was confined to a high-security hospital ward as "a psychopathic patient" (Kaye & Albarelli, 2010).

As a more systematic practice of detaining and sending suspected terrorists to torture-tolerant countries to be interrogated, the procedure was introduced during Bill Clinton's presidency, although extraction of information was not its main aim originally, according to Michael Scheuer, the CIA official requested by the Clinton Administration to implement it (Bergen, 2008). "It came from an improvisation to dismantle these terrorist cells overseas." [...] "[T]he interrogation part wasn't important", Scheuer explains (Bergen, 2008). From 1995, fourteen documented extraordinary renditions were carried out under Clinton, most of them having been sent to Egypt, where at least three were executed (Bergen, 2008).

Meanwhile, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1995, President Clinton made a public apology to those affected by previous unethical government-sponsored experiments, stating that these practices "fail[ed] both the test of [their] national values and the test for humanity" (AwakenedAnon, 2014) as torture indeed did for many. Thus, this statement in combination with the claim in the previous paragraph are consistent with what Salil Shetty (in Houck & Repke, 2017), a former General Secretary of Amnesty International, claimed about governments all over the world and torture: they explicitly reject it, but actually make it easier to perform.

The CIA's Rendition, Detention and Interrogation (RDI) program ran from September 2001 until January 2009, a period during which the agency established a global network of secret prisons (also called 'black sites') in order to secretly detain and interrogate terrorism suspects, for as long as necessary adopting torture methods (Open Society Justice Initiative [OSJI], 2013; Raphael et al., 2019). This network was extremely dynamic in its heyday, prisons often closing when they were under threat of exposure from certain newspapers (Raphael et al., 2019). In late 2002, the first reports of CIA's black sites began to circulate at the major news outlets. On December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2002, Dana Priest and Barton Gellman reported in the *Washington Post* that the CIA was running a clandestine interrogation site near Bagram air

<sup>4</sup> "Recognizing and Developing Countermeasures to Al-Qa'ida Resistance to Interrogation Techniques: A Resistance Training Perspective" (Hoffman et al., 2015). The aim of this report was to counteract the "Manchester Manual", a training book for al-Qaeda operatives found by Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) agents during a search in Manchester, England, of Anas-al-Liby's house, a senior al-Qaeda terrorist who had plotted the Nairobi US embassy bombing (Soufan, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> In the *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual* (HRE Manual, 1983, D-1), the second text about interrogation techniques edited by the CIA, and previously in the *Kubark* (1963, p. 10), it is claimed that among the qualifications of chief importance to an interrogator, there should be: "A. Enough operational training and experience to permit quick recognition of leads; B. Familiarity with the language to be used; C. Extensive background knowledge about the subject's native country."

base (Afghanistan), where detainees were held in painful positions and deprived of sleep (Hoffman et al., 2015).

According to the SSCI (2014), 119 men were detained and kept in custody by the CIA as part of the RDI program, being 2003 the most active period of the program, with 53 prisoners being brought into custody in this year. However, it appears that these figures may be an underestimation due to the CIA's poor recordkeeping or because some prisoners were never under formal custody with the agency, even though in practice they were. For example, at the request of the CIA, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld himself ordered that a detainee in Irak be hidden from Red Cross officials for several months (Mayer, 2005b). With all this in mind, the actual number of detainees may have exceeded 200 (Raphael et al., 2019).

### “Detention Site Green”

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002, Pakistani agents collaborating with the CIA located in al-Qaeda safe houses in Faisalabad (Pakistan) and captured Abu Zubaydah, a 31-year-old Saudi-born Palestinian considered to be one of Osama bin Laden's top lieutenants, in a raid where he was shot and wounded (BBC, 2018; SSCI, 2014). Initially, the detainee was kept in a hospital room, where he was interrogated by FBI special agents, allegedly with reasonable success (SSCI, 2014). To illustrate this, during an interrogation carried out by FBI agents on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002 in the intensive care unit (Abu Zubaydah's earlier injuries had worsened), the prisoner revealed that a man called “Mukhtar” was the al-Qaeda “mastermind” of the 9/11 attacks; Zubaydah identified him on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists List as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), a man accused in 1996 of participating in a terrorist plot to detonate explosives on US aircrafts (SSCI, 2014). From that moment on, CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program literature consistently referred to Abu Zubaydah's information regarding KSM as “important” and “vital” (SSCI, 2014, p. 25). The latter, a Pakistani-born engineer from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, was captured in Rawalpindi (Pakistan) on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003 (Mayer, 2007).

In spite of all that, the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center (CTC) and the OTS proposed utilizing more aggressive techniques with Abu Zubaydah, aiming to make him provide information on two specific issues: the next planned terrorist attack in the USA and which al-Qaeda operatives were located in the country (SSCI, 2014). This is when they contacted “Swigert” in order to be advised about “real-time recommendations to overcome Abu Zubaydah's resistance to interrogation” (SSCI, 2014, p. 26). It appears that CIA's fixations were based on an overestimation of the detainee's responsibilities in al-Qaeda and of his knowledge of the organization's plots to carry out terrorist attacks; this was due to the misconception that the Khaldan training camp (in Afghanistan) which he was administering, was run by al-Qaeda (SSCI, 2014). Far from being a ‘senior lieutenant’ in the organization, al-Qaeda even rejected Abu Zubaydah's request in 1993 to join the group (SSCI, 2014).

Meanwhile, on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the CIA had taken over the interrogation and, during Abu Zubaydah's ongoing hospital admission, began implementing the “new interrogation program” (SSCI, 2014, p. 28). There was initially just one interrogator in the room advising the

detainee that he “had a most important secret that [the interrogator] needed to know” and told the detainee to signal for him “when he decides to discuss ‘that one key item he knows he is keeping from the (interrogator)’” (SSCI, 2014, p. 28). This strategy lay in “only a single-minded, consistent, totally focused questioning of current threat information” (SSCI, 2014, p. 30). The CIA interrogator was located in the room next-door where he had to wait for Abu Zubaydah to notify him when he felt comfortable enough to speak to him with FBI agents and a psychiatrist as back-up. In the meantime, FBI officers proposed (unsuccessfully) to the CIA interrogation team their own strategy based on rapport-building, which, they explained, had been successfully used before on other al-Qaeda members (e.g., al-Owhali, Abu Jandal, Badawi) (SSCI, 2014).

Nevertheless, in order to be more deeply interrogated, Abu Zubaydah was dispatched from Pakistan to a new prison, referred to in the SSCI (2014) with the codename “Detention Site Green” (hereafter, “Green”), the CIA's first black site, which corresponded to a facility located in Thailand (BBC News, 2018; Raphael et al., 2019), in the Royal Thai Air Force base in Udorn Thani, according to some sources (BBC News, 2018). In any case, the choice of creating a detention facility in a foreign country was an attempt to dodge US military custody, who would have to inform the International Committee for the Red Cross about it; and to allow greater control over leaks and interrogation, impeding either the FBI or the US military from taking charge of the prisoner (BBC News, 2018; SSCI, 2014). When information about the black site started to be disclosed by some major newspapers, in December 2002, the CIA decided to shut down the facility (BBC News, 2018; Raphael et al., 2019).

The HRE Manual (1983, A-9; see footnote 5) stated that “by controlling the subject's physical environment, [they would] be able to control [the detainee's] psychological state of mind”. A cable described Abu Zubaydah's cell at “Green” as white, without natural lighting or windows, lit with four halogen lights and with a ventilation device. There were two chairs, one of which was more uncomfortable than the other, which were given to the detainee interchangeably depending on how much he cooperated. The security guards, who only communicated via hand signals when with the prisoner, wore fully-black uniforms, including boots, gloves, balaclavas, and goggles, to avoid being recognized, as well as to prevent him “from seeing the security guards as individuals who he may attempt to establish a relationship or dialogue with” (SSCI, 2014, p. 28). In addition, loud rock music was played or noise generators were activated to enhance the detainee's “sense of hopelessness”, while usually having to be naked and deprived of sleep (SSCI, 2014, p. 29).

In June 2002, the CIA interrogation team recommended that the prisoner be held in isolation for several weeks so that the team could leave the facility “as a means of keeping [Abu Zubaydah] off-balance and to allow the team needed time off for a break and to attend to personal matters” (SSCI, 2014, p. 30). As a result, from June 18<sup>th</sup> to August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the detainee remained in isolation for 47 days without being asked any question. The CIA later stated publicly and in classified memos that during the employment of “established US Government interrogation techniques,” the prisoner “stopped all cooperation” in June 2002, requiring the development of the CIA's Enhanced Interrogation Techniques (EITs) (SSCI, 2014, p. 31).



At the beginning of July 2002, CIA officers held several meetings in the CIA Headquarters (HQ) to discuss the possible use of “novel interrogation methods” on Abu Zubaydah. In the course of these meetings, “Swigert” proposed the use of 12 techniques derived from the SERE school, that have come to be known as EITs: (1) the attention grasp<sup>6</sup>; (2) walling<sup>7</sup>; (3) facial hold<sup>8</sup>; (4) facial slap; (5) cramped confinement<sup>9</sup>; (6) wall standing<sup>10</sup>; (7) stress positions; (8) sleep deprivation; (9) waterboarding<sup>11</sup>; (10) use of diapers; (11) use of insects; and (12) mock burial<sup>12</sup> (SSCI, 2014, p. 32).

After Abu Zubaydah had been in complete isolation for 47 days, the most aggressive interrogation phase (walling, attention grasps, slapping, facial hold, stress positions, cramped confinement, white noise, sleep deprivation, and waterboarding<sup>13</sup>) began at approximately 11:50 AM on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002, and continued in “varying combination, 24 hours a day” until August 23<sup>rd</sup> (SSCI, 2014, p. 42). During this period, “Green” cables described the detainee as “compliant,” informing CIA HQ that when the interrogator “raised his eyebrow, without instructions,” the detainee “slowly walked on his own to the water table and sat down.” When the interrogator “snapped his fingers twice,” Abu Zubaydah would lie flat on the waterboard (SSCI, 2014, p. 43). On August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the interrogation team stated that it was highly unlikely that the detainee possessed the information they were seeking (SSCI, 2014). Despite the assessment of prison staff, CIA HQ insisted that the prisoner was withholding information that was in the interests of national security and instructed the interrogators to continue using the EITs (SSCI, 2014). However, the “aggressive phase of interrogation” ended days after CIA HQ officers arrived at “Green” following a videoconference that they had held together. The officers had been shown an interrogation video that the interrogation team had warned was “quite graphic” and possibly “disturbing to some viewers” (SSCI, 2014, p. 43).

CIA records indicate that Abu Zubaydah failed to provide the information which would justify or approve the CIA's EITs, namely, the location of the next terrorist attack and the al-Qaeda operatives in the USA (SSCI, 2014). Furthermore, as compared with the period prior to August 2002, which was when the EITs began with him, the amount of intelligence produced by the detainee remained largely unchanged

(SSCI, 2014). However, CIA HQ told the National Security Council that the techniques were working on the prisoner, even “producing meaningful results” (SSCI, 2014, p. 45). Abu Zubaydah was in several ways a trial or test run for the EITs (Soufan, 2020). “Swigert” and “Dunbar”, who the CIA alleged sent them a cable from the detention site, recommended that “the aggressive phase at (Detention Site Green) should be used as a template for future interrogation of high value captives.”. The cable stated:

Our goal was to reach the stage where we have broken any will or ability of subject to resist or deny providing us information (intelligence) to which he had access. We additionally sought to bring subject to the point that we confidently assess that he does not/not possess undisclosed threat information, or intelligence that could prevent a terrorist event (SSCI, 2014, p. 46).

When, many years later, Abu Zubaydah was interviewed by the Criminal Investigation Task Force (CITF) in Guantánamo, he was shown a picture of Abu Hafis al-Masri and in relation to the suspect, declared, “Now this is the number three in al-Qaeda.” When asked why he had in the past told CIA interrogators that he himself was the number three in al-Qaeda, he replied that he had realized that the interrogators would continue to torture him until they got the information that they wanted to hear (Soufan, 2020, p. 381).

#### “Detention Site Cobalt”

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002, CIA HQ set aside over \$200,000 to build a detention center, identified in SSCI (2014) as “Detention Site Cobalt” (hereafter, “Cobalt”). The facility, which started operating in September 2002 (SSCI, 2014), was a hidden, underground prison in Afghanistan, known as “the Dark Prison” by detainees (Raphael et al., 2019). The latter, according to CIA records, was probably due to the windows at “Cobalt” being boarded up so that it would be pitch black for detainees (SSCI, 2014). The guards monitored the detainees using headlamps and in order to accentuate their helplessness, loud music was played constantly. While confined to their cells, the prisoners were chained to the walls and provided with pails for makeshift toilets. Four of the twenty cells at the facility included a bar across the top of the cell to which the prisoners were shackled, according to later reports, which alleged that their hands were above their heads as a consequence, forcing them to stand, and therefore stopping them from sleeping (SSCI, 2014).

One senior interrogator told the CIA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) that at “Cobalt” “literally, a detainee could go for days or weeks without anyone looking at him,” and that his team found one detainee who, “as far as we could determine, ‘had been chained to the wall in a standing position for 17 days” (SSCI, 2014, p. 50). According to the CIA interrogator, some of the detainees at the prison “‘literally looked like a dog that had been kenneled.’ When the doors to their cells were opened, ‘they cowered’” (SSCI, 2014, p. 50). The chief of interrogations at the facility told the CIA OIG that “(Detention Site Cobalt) is good for interrogations because it is the closest thing he has seen to a dungeon, facilitating the displacement of detainee expectations” (SSCI, 2014, p.

<sup>6</sup> The prisoner is grabbed with one hand on each side of his/her collar and is brusquely drawn toward the interrogator.

<sup>7</sup> The detainee is repeatedly slammed against walls.

<sup>8</sup> To hold a detainee's head still with palms on both sides of his/her face.

<sup>9</sup> The individual is placed for hours in a box so small that he/she is forced to crouch.

<sup>10</sup> The detainee is forced to remain standing with his/her arms in front of him/her stretched far enough so that his/her fingers touch a wall in front of him/her and to support his/her body weight.

<sup>11</sup> To immobilize the subject in a supino position on an inclined bench and with his/her head towards the floor and the feet lifted (*Trendelenburg position*), covering his/her face with a piece of cloth and pouring water above it.

<sup>12</sup> The detainee is led to believe he/she will be buried alive if he/she does not cooperate during the interrogation.

<sup>13</sup> President Bush stated that he had authorized waterboarding, which, according to Michael Hayden (a former CIA director), was applied on three captives: Abu Zubaydah, KSM, and al-Nashiri (OSJI, 2013). This contrasts with the traditional rejection in the U.S. judicial system (in domestic courts, commissions, and court-martials) of a practice that has received several names (“water torture”, “suffocation by immersion”, etc. [Wallach, 2007]).

50). An analyst who conducted interrogations at the jail told the CIA OIG that "(Detention Site Cobalt) is an EIT" (SSCI, 2014, p. 50).

In November 2002, a delegation of several officers from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBP) conducted an assessment of "Cobalt". On December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002, officers at CIA HQ met with individuals from the FBP to learn more about this inspection. According to a CIA officer, the FBP staff commented that:

They have never been in a facility where individuals are so sensory deprived, i.e., constant white noise, no talking, everyone in the dark, with the guards wearing a light on their head when they collected and escorted a detainee to an interrogation cell, detainees constantly being shackled to the wall or floor, and the starkness of each cell (concrete and bars). There is nothing like this in the Federal Bureau of Prisons (SSCI, 2014, p. 60).

Ridha al-Najjar, a man identified by the CIA as a former bodyguard for Osama bin Laden, was the first CIA detainee to be held at "Cobalt", from September 2002, after being arrested along with others in Karachi (Pakistan) owing to Pakistan's series of police raids in late May 2002 (SSCI, 2014).

While the CIA was describing the reasons for needing to use the EITs on Abu Zubaydah, to the Department of Justice, a parallel internal discussion at the CIA was taking place regarding al-Najjar (SSCI, 2014). On August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the day after Abu Zubaydah's interrogation using the EITs at "Green" began, CIA HQ authorized the proposed interrogation plan for al-Najjar, to include the use of loud music (at least at the level that would be able to cause physical harm such as permanent hearing loss), poor-quality food (as long as it was nutritionally adequate for sustenance), sleep deprivation, and hooding (SSCI, 2014). More than a month later, on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002, CIA interrogators described al-Najjar as "clearly a broken man", "on the verge of complete breakdown", and willing to do whatever was asked, according to the cable (SSCI, 2014, p. 53). According to the CIA OIG, the detention and interrogation of Ridha al-Najjar "became the model" for handling other CIA detainees at "Cobalt", and subsequently an intelligence report about these interventions was disseminated among CIA officers (SSCI, 2014, p. 54).

In November 2002, ALEC Station officers requested that CIA hire interrogator "Dunbar" for an inspection at "Cobalt" to assess a detainee as a candidate for the EITs (SSCI, 2014). During the stay, the psychologist proposed using the techniques on several detainees, offering suggestions to the CIA officer in charge at the site (referred in the SSCI [2014] as "CIA Officer 1") regarding how to apply the methods. In addition, he observed the interrogations of Gul Rahman, an Afghan suspected Islamic extremist, who, as reported to CIA HQ, was subjected to "48 hours of sleep deprivation, auditory overload, total darkness, isolation, a cold shower, and rough treatment" (SSCI, 2014, p. 54). Although CIA HQ did not approve these techniques in advance, officers there, after learning of their being used, informed them that they were "motivated to extract any and all operational information on al-Qaeda and Hezbi Islami from Gul Rahman" and suggested that "enhanced measures" might be needed to gain the detainee's compliance (SSCI, 2014, p. 54). The site manager ordered that Gul Rahman be shackled to the wall of his cell in a position

that required him to rest on the bare concrete floor, wearing only a sweatshirt, as "CIA Officer 1" (identified as Matthew Zirbel in a declassified report [Silverstein, 2014]) had ordered the prisoner to be undressed when he had been judged to be uncooperative during an earlier interrogation (SSCI, 2014). The next day, November 20<sup>th</sup>, the guards found Gul Rahman's dead body. An internal CIA review and autopsy assessed that he likely died from hypothermia (SSCI, 2014). The CIA managed to cover up Rahman's death until 2010 (without his family ever being notified) when Adam Goldman and Kathy Gannon, from Associated Press, revealed his identity. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the US Justice Department announced that they had accepted a full criminal investigation to be opened into the deaths of Gul Rahman and Manadel al-Jamadi, the latter who died at Abu Ghraib in 2003 (OSJI, 2013). On August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Attorney General Eric Holder announced that no criminal charges would pursue in either case because the evidence "would not be sufficient to obtain and sustain a conviction beyond a reasonable doubt" (US Justice Department, 2012).

#### **"Detention Site Blue" and Other "Colors"**

"Green" was closed in December 2002 when the press discovered the existence of the facility (Raphael et al., 2019). The two detainees at the prison, Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, were transferred to a new detention site in Poland on December 4<sup>th</sup>, accompanied by "Swigert" and "Dunbar" to "ensure continuity to the interrogation/debriefing process" (Raphael et al., 2019, p. 109). Al-Nashiri, who had been identified as an al-Qaeda "terrorist operations planner" by the CIA, as well as having close connections to the plotting of several terrorist attacks, had been captured in the United Arab Emirates in mid-October 2002, then sent to "Green" in November 2002, where he had been interrogated using the EITs (SSCI, 2014, p. 66).

The new site, identified in SSCI (2014) as "Detention Site Blue" (hereafter, "Blue"), consisted of two buildings within a military intelligence training base, located in a forest outside the village of Stare Kiejkuty, in the lake region of north-eastern Poland (Raphael et al., 2019). The CIA invested at least \$300,000 to improve the site, where Polish officials provided perimeter control and operational security during prisoner transfers to and from the Szymany Airport (Raphael et al., 2019), nowadays known as Olsztyn-Mazury Airport.

Although the conditions of confinement in "Blue" appear to have been an improvement on the conditions in "Cobalt", torture at the site was routine, as was the case with al-Nashiri (Raphael et al., 2019). He received the EITs in "Blue" on four separate occasions, in spite of each period usually ending with an assessment from on-site interrogators judging his behavior to be compliant and cooperative, and advising against the continuation of these practices: "[W]ithout tangible proof of lying or intentional withholding [...] [E]mploying enhanced measures will accomplish nothing except show [al-Nashiri] that he will be punished whether he cooperates or not" (SSCI, 2014, p. 68).

Nevertheless, officers at CIA HQ disagree with these assessments and sought to continue the use of the EITs on the detainee, in accordance with the idea that he had not yet provided actionable intelligence on imminent attacks (as with Abu Zubaydah, personnel at

CIA HQ overestimated the information al-Nashiri had access to within al-Qaeda (SSCI, 2014). For this reason, CIA HQ sent a new officer to “Blue” to question and assess al-Nashiri, later revealing that during these interrogation sessions, the captive was placed in a standing stress position with his hands affixed over his head for nearly two and a half days by the new interrogator, and, during the debriefings, while blindfolded, had a pistol pointed near his head and a cordless drill operating near his body (Goldman & Apuzzo, 2011a; OSJI, 2013; SSCI, 2014). The CIA inspector general labeled these actions as “mock execution”, which is forbidden in U.S.A., and it led to the interrogator being reprimanded even though no further action was taken; thus, after retiring, he returned to the CIA as a contractor (Goldman & Apuzzo, 2011a).

In January 2003, “Dunbar” arrived at “Blue” to judge whether al-Nashiri could be given EITs again. The resulting interrogation plan would include “latitude to use the full range of enhanced exploitation and interrogation measures,” in order to eliminate the detainee’s “sense of control and predictability” and establish a “desired level of helplessness,” (SSCI, 2014, p. 71). After receiving details of the interrogation plan, the CIA’s chief of interrogators expressed serious concerns over the long-term impact that a continued use of EITs could have on the prisoner, a worry which eventually led the officer to announce his full withdrawal from the CIA interrogation program and his early retirement from the agency (SSCI, 2014).

There were also concerns about possible conflicts of interest related to the dual role of the contractors, “Swigert” and “Dunbar”, as interrogators and psychological evaluators. On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2003, a cable from CIA HQ stated that “the individual at the interrogation site who administers the techniques is not the same person who issues the psychological assessment of record” (SSCI, 2014, p. 65). In June 2003, however, “Swigert” and “Dunbar” were deployed to “Blue” to interrogate KSM, as well as to assess his “psychological stability” and “resistance posture” (SSCI, 2014, p. 65). In total, KSM was waterboarded at least 183 times over the course of fifteen separate sessions, some in which the contractors had partly participated, then subsequently his psychological conditions were assessed by them (SSCI, 2014). A psychologist in the CIA’s Office of Medical Services (OMS) objected to the conflict of interest presented by this dual role and stated that “no professional in the field would credit [Swigert and Dunbar’s] later judgments as psychologists assessing the subjects of their enhanced measures” (Hoffman et al., 2015, p. 139; SSCI, 2014, p. 66).

“Blue” was closed in September 2003 (as had been agreed with the Polish authorities), with five of the six prisoners held at the time of closure being transferred to a newly-opened detention site, located in Romania, a secret prison referred to in the SSCI (2014) as “Detention Site Black” (Raphael et al., 2019). This makeshift basement secret jail was installed inside a government building (where the National Registry Office for Classified Information [ORNISS] was located, which handled data from NATO and the European Union) situated in northern Bucharest, in a residential neighborhood near to the center of Romania’s capital (Goldman & Apuzzo, 2011b). On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005, *The Washington Post* published a story on ‘Eastern European democracies’ which hosted black sites. The Human Rights Watch identified these countries as Poland and Romania, which led the authorities of the latter country

to demand the closure of the secret prison in a matter of hours (Raphael et al., 2019).

The sixth detainee in custody in “Blue” was Abu Zubaydah, the man with whom the CIA’s EIT experiment started; he was moved to Morocco, then to two more black sites after that which had just opened at the US Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay (not to be confused with the Department of Defense’s [DoD] prison), called detention sites “Indigo” and “Maroon”, about which little is known (Raphael et al., 2019). According to the European Court of Human Rights, in February 2005, Abu Zubaydah was rendered to Lithuania at the codenamed “Detention Site Violet” (Raphael et al., 2019). At the site, a concrete structure was built within the confines of the walls of an exclusive riding school in Antaviliai, an area with a forest 20 km northeast of Vilnius, the country’s capital (Cole & Ross, 2009). The country had allegedly permitted the CIA to build the secret prison following Bush’s visit there in 2002 when he showed allegiance to their bid to join NATO (Cole & Ross, 2009). Indeed, in March 2004, six months before the black site was opened, the school was sold by its owners, a local family, to Elite, LLC, a CIA front company, coinciding with Lithuania’s formal entry into NATO (Cole & Ross, 2009).

Abu Zubaydah was held in “Violet” until it closed in March 2006, at which time he was sent to “Detention Site Brown”, in Afghanistan, until September 2006, when he was transferred into US military detention in Guantanamo Bay, where he was still being detained in May 2019 (Raphael et al., 2019).

## Conclusion

The CIA offered the following explanation regarding how the psychologists were hired in their June 2013 Response to the SSCI:

Drs. (Swigert) and (Dunbar) had the closest proximate expertise CIA sought at the beginning of the program, specifically in the area of *non-standard means of interrogation* [...] [W]e believe their expertise is so unique that we would have been derelict had we not sought them out when it became clear that CIA would be heading into the uncharted territory of the program. (italics and emphasis in original) (SSCI, 2014, p. 32).

This declaration does not seem particularly sincere considering that the CIA had been investigating psychology-based means of interrogation (the alleged expertise of the recruited psychologists) for more than sixty years (Kinzer, 2019; McCoy, 2006, 2012). To illustrate this, half a century before this statement had been released, the agency asserted in its first counterintelligence interrogation handbook that “It is no longer possible to discuss interrogation significantly without reference to the psychological research conducted in the past decade (*Kubark*, 1963, p. 2).” Similarly, in another part, it mentioned, “The available evidence suggests that resistance is sapped principally by psychological rather than physical pressures” (*Kubark*, 1963, p. 92).

What has already been pointed out (e.g., Blakeley, 2011; Kinzer, 2019; McCoy, 2006, 2012) is the continuity between the methods of interrogatee exploitation employed or proposed by the CIA during the Cold War and the practices used by the agency after the 9/11 attacks.

For example, under the epigraph “News from home”, it was indicated in the HRE Manual (1983, J-7) that “The subject may get the idea that his relatives are under duress or suffering. A suggestion at the proper time that this cooperation or confession can help protect the innocent may be effective”. This advice is likely to have been heeded in the case of Nazar Ali, an “intellectually challenged” individual detained by the CIA during the “war on terrorism”, “[W]hose taped crying was used as leverage against his family member” (SSCI, 2014, p.16). In another instance, the HRE Manual (1983, J-3) stated in reference to the “questioner” that, “He is able to manipulate the subject’s environment, to create unpleasant situations. The subject is very much aware that the “questioner” controls his ultimate disposition.” It sounds rather similar to the summary that former FBI agent Ali Soufan made of the new method of interrogation used for Abu Zubaydah (replacing his own), after first meeting the psychologist contracted by the CIA to develop it: “His idea was to make Abu Zubaydah see his interrogator as a god who controls his suffering.” (Soufan, 2011, p. 394). It appears that rather than early explorers mapping an “uncharted territory”, the psychologists recruited by the CIA to create the EITs were just heirs of a tradition (McCoy, 2006, 2012).

Perhaps it was not just a tradition but also a part of culture. Sensory deprivation, by way of hooding prisoners for example, has been one of the main psychological paradigms recommended by the CIA to exploit detainees since the 1950s (McCoy, 2006, 2012), which seems to have served as a model for other countries. In Hendaye (France), on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1983, three undercover agents, hired with reserved funds by officers of the Spanish Ministry of Internal Affairs, kidnapped Segundo Marey, a 51-year-old furniture salesman who had been mistaken for the ETA terrorist organization leader Mikel Lujúa. Marey was taken to a cabin in Matienzo (Cantabria), where he remained hooded for ten days, after which he was released (*EL PAÍS*, 2001).

The secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations conducted by the CIA were designed to be implemented outside the US under the cover of secrecy. They could have been carried out due to the active participation of foreign governments from every continent, providing different types of support to the operations (OSJI, 2013). There were 54 countries which were known to be involved, including 24 from Europe, 15 from Asia, 13 from Africa, one from America and the other from Oceania (OSJI, 2013), although the list might be incomplete (e.g., Eski & Eski, 2017). Among these countries, Italy is the only one where a court has convicted officials for their involvement in extraordinary rendition operations (Bergen, 2008; McCoy, 2006). Canada is the only country to have issued an apology to a victim of an extraordinary rendition (Maher Arar) and is one of only four countries (namely Sweden, Australia, and the United Kingdom) to have offered compensation to such victims (OSJI, 2013). This information seems to support the conclusion that, far from being an exception or anomaly among the international community, the CIA’s EITs may have set a benchmark in worldwide secret counter-terrorist enforcement.

Immediately after Osama Bin Laden was shot dead by US Special Forces in May 2011, former US Vice President Dick Cheney asserted that the CIA’s use of EITs against KSM, especially waterboarding, produced the intelligence that led the CIA to Bin Laden (Blakeley,

2011). On the contrary, Ali Soufan, responsible for the successful rapport-based interrogations of Abu Zubaydah and Abu Jandal, among others, expressed that EITs were a complete failure in reference to how KSM, after having been repeatedly waterboarded, was still capable of practicing classic counterinterrogation techniques, telling interrogators about a plot that had been derailed a long time before, managing to convince them that he was cooperating, when in fact he was giving them outdated information:

And while KSM was “confessing” to plots already thwarted, and those running the EIT program thought that this was important news, he didn’t tell them about plots that hadn’t yet happened but which he definitely knew about because of his position as al-Qaeda military commander, such as the cells working in Madrid, London, and Jakarta (Soufan, 2020, p. 368-9).

All the cases that Soufan pointed out, as well as the 9/11 attacks, are crimes against humanity, but these events should not give us justification to lose our humane behavior by descending to “one of the lowest points” in the USA’s history, according to Dianne Feinstein, Chair of the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI, 2014). This is because, among other reasons, such practices are ineffective (e.g., Arrigo & Wagner, 2007; Houck & Repke, 2017; McCoy, 2006; O’Mara, 2018; Pérez-Sales, 2016; Soufan, 2020).

Dan Coleman, just like Soufan, a former FBI agent, told Mayer (2005a) that he had learned to treat even the most despicable suspects as if they were friends. Many of the suspects he had interrogated expected to be tortured and were stunned to learn that they had rights under the American system. Thus, Coleman claimed, due process made detainees more compliant, not less. “It’s human nature,” he said, adding, “Brutalization doesn’t work.” (Mayer, 2005a).

As in other cases, the CIA itself knew about the advantages of a rapport being formed between interrogator and interrogatee, judging by the (virtually identical) way of expressing how convenient it was in the two manuals on interrogation that the agency issued twenty years apart: “[A] lack of rapport may cause a subject to withhold information that he would have provided freely. Establishing rapport may induce a subject who is initially determined to withhold to change his attitude.” (HRE Manual, 1983, I-1; Kubark, 1963, p. 57).

In May 2007, in the US primary Republican presidential debate, the moderator asked the candidates how aggressively they would interrogate the perpetrators of an averted attack, in order to avoid a new and larger one, after three previous suicide bombings had caused hundreds of Americans to be killed (Brooks, 2007). In response to this question, there was broad support by most of the candidates for measures of enhanced interrogation. However, in the midst of this storm, the most discordant voice was that of the Senator for Arizona, John McCain, a former prisoner of war tortured for years in North Vietnam, who eventually became the Republican presidential candidate in the 2008 election. “[I]t’s not about the terrorists,” he said, “it’s about us. It’s about what kind of country we are.” (Brooks, 2007).



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