

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2005/11/20/cia-whitewashing-torture>

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Statements by Goss Contradict U.S. Law and Practice

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Porter Goss, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has made misleading statements about the CIA's use of torture and mistreatment of detainees, Human Rights Watch said today.

A growing body of evidence shows that the CIA has tortured detainees, said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. Many interrogation techniques authorized for use by the CIA amount to torture. Their authorization by higher-ranking officials is illegal and potentially criminal.

Goss is quoted as saying: This agency does not do torture. Torture does not work. We use lawful capabilities to collect vital information, and we do it in a variety of unique and innovative ways, all of which are legal and none of which are torture.

But contrary to Goss's assertions, the CIA is alleged to have authorized interrogation techniques which do constitute torture, and which the United States has historically considered as such.

A November 18 ABC News [report](#) quoted several CIA officials stating that CIA leadership approved six interrogation techniques in March 2002 for use against detainees held at CIA-run facilities in Afghanistan. The techniques included slaps, sleep deprivation, forced standing, exposure to cold, and waterboarding, in which interrogators immerse or pour water over a detainee's face until he believes he will suffocate or drown.

Waterboarding is intended to cause a victim to believe he is about to die, and is similar to a mock execution. Earlier this year, in March 2005, Goss justified waterboarding as a professional interrogation technique during a Senate hearing. Other Bush administration officials, when questioned about waterboarding, have refused to rule it out.

There is no doubt that waterboarding is torture, despite the administration's reluctance to say so, said Roth.

Waterboarding is prohibited under international law and domestic U.S. law. Known as the submarino in Latin America, where it was used extensively in the 1970s and 1980s, waterboarding has been condemned as torture for decades.

Other techniques described in the November 18 ABC News [report](#)—prolonged forced standing, sleep deprivation, and exposure to cold—are illegal and may possibly amount to torture. These techniques were used by Soviet and North Korean interrogators, and have been reported more recently in Egypt, Burma, Iran and Turkey. For descriptions of these techniques and their effects both historical examples and accounts from the State Department's own human rights reports [click here](#).

The administration has argued that the CIA has and should continue to have latitude to use techniques that are cruel, inhumane, or degrading so long as the victim is a non-American held abroad. This claim is wholly [at odds with international law](#).

Human Rights Watch renewed its call for Congress to appoint an independent, bipartisan commission to examine interrogation practices. In light of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales' conflict of interest as an architect of U.S. interrogation policy, Human Rights Watch also called on the Bush administration to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate criminal activity in the military and CIA, including the conduct of military and civilian officials.

For descriptions of the effects of techniques allegedly authorized for use by the CIA, [click here](#).

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