

Extraordinary Rendition

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Friday, 11 March 2005 09:18 - Last Updated Friday, 11 March 2005 09:18

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Global Eye

By Chris Floyd

The Moscow Times

March 11, '05

In the heady months after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the chickenhawks of the Bush Regime were eager to flash their tough-guy cojones to the world. Led by the former prep-school cheerleader in the Oval Office, swaggering Bushists openly bragged of "kicking ass" with macho tactics like torture and

"extraordinary rendition."

"We don't kick the [expletive] out of them," one top Bush official told The Washington Post on Dec. 26, 2002. "We send them to other countries so they can kick the [expletive] out of them." In that same article, other Bush honchos boasted about withholding medical treatment from wounded prisoners; knowingly sending prisoners to be tortured in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco and Jordan ("I do it with my eyes open," said one top agent); and breaking international law as a routine part of interrogations by U.S. operatives. "If you're not violating someone's human rights," said an interrogation supervisor, "you're probably not doing your job." These freely admitted violations included [beatings, hooding, exposure, sexual humiliation and the medieval barbarism of strappado](#) : chaining a prisoner with his arms twisted behind his back and suspending him from the ceiling, where the weight of his own body tears at his sockets and sinews.

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The invasion of Iraq, itself a war crime of staggering dimensions, simply extended this long-established and officially sanctioned system of brutality to a new arena. And to thousands of new victims, the overwhelming majority of whom were innocent of any crime, as the Red Cross reported. While the investigative work of Seymour Hersh and others in exposing the horrors of Abu Ghraib is indeed laudable, it should not have come as any surprise. The atrocities detailed in the revelations were identical to those the Bush Regime had openly acknowledged as standard practice just months before.

The only difference, of course, was the fact that pictures of the Abu Ghraib atrocities were also published and broadcast. Public sensibilities -- untroubled by previous verbal admissions buried deep in slabs of newsprint -- were suddenly shocked by the lurid visuals. A Republican-led Senate investigation declared that it had uncovered "even worse" pictures of torture: stomach-curdling photos and videos of bloody abuse that could stain America's name for generations. The Bush Regime braced for an election-year firestorm of scandal. Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld offered the president his resignation.

Then -- nothing happened. The outraged Republican senators never released their damning pictures. Rumsfeld kept his job. A "few bad apples" in the lower ranks were put on trial; the top figures involved in the torture system were promoted. And even though Pentagon and CIA investigators continue to document hundreds -- hundreds -- of cases of torture, abuse and outright murder in Bush's gulag, the storm has passed. Indeed, Bushists like John Yoo, one of the primary authors of the "torture memos" undergirding the gulag, see the 2004 election as a public affirmation of blood and brutality. The vote is "proof that the debate is over," Yoo told *The New Yorker*. "The issue is dying out."

Yet the Regime was shaken a bit by the brief tempest. Instead of macho swagger about "kicking ass" and "taking off the gloves," there are now prim assurances of legality. PR fig leaves are being artfully draped over once-bulging displays of butchness. This week, *The New York Times* was chosen for a high-profile leak, "revealing" that while Bush himself gave the order to "render" U.S. captives to nations that practice torture -- supposedly as a cost-saving measure -- the CIA is scrupulously ensuring that no prisoners are ever actually tortured by foreign torturers in the

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torture chambers where Bush has consigned them. Such prissy hand-wringing is a far cry from the old braggadocio ("I did it with my eyes open") and cynical shoulder-shrugging of December 2002, when one rendition op dismissed the very notion of CIA supervision of its foreign torture partners: "If we're not there in the room with them," he smirked, "who is to say" what goes on in the outsourced

interrogations?

But Bush is facing something far more dangerous than the occasional hiccup of bad PR or toothless probes by his Senate bagmen. There are now several lawsuits afoot filed by innocent survivors of the "rendition" system set up at Bush's direct order. These cases could not only expose the ugly guts of his gulag, but also produce direct evidence of criminal culpability on the part of Bush and his minions under U.S. and international law.

The Regime has responded with draconian ruthlessness to this genuine threat. In the main rendition case -- and in an unrelated lawsuit concerning officially confirmed evidence of terrorist infiltration at the FBI before 9/11 -- Bush is invoking the rarely-used, extra-constitutional "state secrets privilege." This nebulous maneuver, unanchored in law or legislation, allows the government to suppress any evidence against it merely by asserting, without proof, that disclosure of the truth might "harm national security." Evidence "protected" in this way cannot even be heard by a judge in secret -- a well-established practice used successfully in numerous other national security cases over the years. It is simply buried forever, and the case collapses.

It is almost certain that Bush's invocation of this "night-and-fog" measure will be upheld. So let us be clear about the consequences. It will mean that any crime committed by a government official -- torture, rendition, murder, state terrorism, even treason -- can be sealed in permanent darkness. The justice system itself will be "rendered" into a black hole. The victims of state crime -- American citizens as well as foreign captives -- will be left without rights, without redress, without a voice. Bush's kingdom of strappado will reign supreme.

[Annotations](#)

[please see original for active links]

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U.S. Decries Abuse But Defends Interrogations
Washington Post, Dec. 26, 2002

[Bush Order] Lets CIA Freely Send Suspects to Foreign Jails
New York Times, March 6, 2005

Bush Wielding Secrecy Privilege to End Lawsuits
Chicago Tribune, March 3, 2005

State Secrets Assertion: Maher Arar vs. John Ashcroft, et al
U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, Jan. 17, 2005

Rumsfeld Says He Twice Offered His Resignation
Seattle Times, Feb. 4, 2005

Review: Torture and Truth and The Torture Papers
The New Statesman, March 7, 2005

The Torture Papers: Full Faith and Credit of the U.S. Government
San Diego Union-Tribune, Feb. 27, 2005

Is the U.S. Losing Moral Authority on Human Rights?
Christian Science Monitor, March 7, 2005

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New Interrogation Rules Set for Detainees in Iraq
New York Times, March 10, 2005

Pentagon Report Set Framework For Use of Torture
Wall Street Journal, June 7, 2004

Senators See Abu Ghraib Abuse Photos Held by Defense Department
Washington Post, May 12, 2004

GOP Leaders Oppose Release of More Abuse Photos
CNN.com, May 12, 2004

A Temporary Coup: Torture, War and the Corruption of Intelligence
Salon.com, June 14, 2004

President Authorized Interrogation
Washington Times, Dec. 20, 2004

Time for An Accounting
International Herald Tribune, Feb. 20, 2005

In Torture We Trust?
The Nation, March 31, 2003

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Statement of FBI Whistleblower Sibel Edmonds
U.S. House of Representatives, March 5, 2005