Report: Over 50 Corrupt Administrations Assisted the CIA Outsource Torture

by Spencer Ackerman via jan - Wired *Tuesday, Feb 5 2013, 9:31pm*
international / prose / post

In the years following 9/11 the CIA ran a worldwide program to hold and interrogate suspected 'terrorists' and members of al-Qaeda, sometimes brutally. It wasn't alone. The agency had literally dozens of partners in crime that helped in various ways large and small. However, it has never been clear until now just how many nations enabled CIA rendition and torture on behalf of the criminally corrupt American administration.

A new report from the Open Society Foundation details the CIA's effort to outsource torture since 9/11 in excruciating detail. Known as "extraordinary rendition," the practice concerns taking detainees to and from U.S. custody without a legal process — think of it like an off-the-books extradition — and often entailed handing detainees over to countries that practiced torture. The Open Society Foundation found that 136 people went through the post-9/11 extraordinary rendition, and 54 countries were complicit in it.

Some were official U.S. adversaries, like Iran and Syria, brought together with the CIA by the shared interest of combating terrorism. "By engaging in torture and other abuses associated with secret detention and extraordinary rendition," writes chief Open Society Foundation investigator Amrit Singh in a report released early Tuesday, "the U.S. government violated domestic and international law, thereby diminishing its moral standing and eroding support for its counterterrorism efforts worldwide as these abuses continue to come to light."

Iran didn't do any torturing on behalf of the CIA. Instead, it quietly transferred at least 15 of its own detainees to Afghan custody in March 2002. Six of those found their way into the CIA's secret prisons. "Because the hand-over happened soon after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan," Singh writes, "Iran was aware that the United States would have effective control over any detainees handed over to Afghan authorities." At least one of those detainees, Tawfik al-Bihani, ended up at Guantanamo Bay, where his official [file](#) makes no mention of his time with the CIA.

Iran's proxy Syria did torture on behalf of the United States. The most famous case involves [Maher Arar](#), a Canadian citizen snatched in 2002 by the U.S. at John F. Kennedy International Airport before the CIA sent him to Syria under the mistaken impression he was a terrorist. In Syrian

custody, Arar was "imprisoned for more than ten months in a tiny grave-like cell, beaten with cables, and threatened with electric shocks by the Syrian government," Singh writes.

But it wasn't just Arar. At least seven others were rendered to Syria. Among their destinations: a prison in west Damascus called the Palestine Branch, which features an area called "the Grave," comprised of "individual cells that were roughly the size of coffins." Syrian intelligence reportedly uses something called a "German Chair" to "stretch the spine." These days the Obama administration prefers to call for Syrian dictator Bashar Assad, the murderer of over 60,000 Syrians, to step down.

Many, many other countries were complicit in the renditions. For a month, Zimbabwe hosted five CIA detainees seized from Malawi in June 2003 before they were released in Sudan. Turkey, a NATO ally, allowed a plane operated by Richmor Aviation, which has been linked to CIA renditions, to refuel in Adana in 2002 and gave an Iraqi terrorist suspect to the CIA in 2006. Lots of countries played host to CIA rendition flights, including Sri Lanka, Thailand, Afghanistan, Belgium and Azerbaijan. Italy let the plane carrying Arar refuel. Under Muammar Gadhafi, Libya was an eager participant in the CIA's rendition scheme — and the Open Society Foundation sifted through documents found after Gadhafi fell to discover that Hong Kong helped shuttle a detainee named Abu Munthir to the Libyan regime.

The full 54 countries that aided in post-9/11 renditions: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Libya, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, Yemen, and Zimbabwe. The Open Society Foundation doesn't rule out additional ones being involved that it has yet to discover.

Singh and the Open Society Foundation don't presume that the CIA is out of the extraordinary renditions game under Obama. Danger Room pal Jeremy Scahill recently toured a prison in Somalia that the CIA uses. While Obama issued an executive order in 2009 to get the CIA out of the detentions business, the order "did not apply to facilities used for short term, transitory detention." The Obama administration says it won't transfer detainees to countries without a pledge from a host government not to torture them — but Syria's Assad made exactly that pledge to the U.S. before torturing Maher Arar.

Much of this is likely to be contained in the Senate intelligence committee's recent report into CIA torture. It's unclear when, if ever, that report will be declassified. But the Open Society Foundation's study into renditions comes right as Obama aide John Brennan — already under pressure to clarify his role, if any, in post-9/11 torture — is about to testify to the panel ahead of becoming CIA director. It remains to be seen if the Senate committee will ask Brennan to clarify if the CIA still practices extraordinary rendition, along with its old friends.

http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2013/02/54-countries-rendition/