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Ex-envoy to Uzbekistan goes public on torture (updated)

By: Ann Penketh/John Lettice on: 30.12.2005 [19:18] (120 reads)



Craig Murray provides smoking gun via the Internet

Published: 30 December 2005

The Independent/more detail in The Register blog

Pic: thanks to Blairwatch.co.uk

(9591 bytes) [c]



Britain's former ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, has defied the Foreign Office by publishing on the Internet documents providing evidence that the British Government knowingly received information extracted by torture in the "war on terror".

Mr Murray, who publicly raised the issue of the usefulness of information obtained under torture before he was forced to leave his job last year, submitted his forthcoming book, *Murder in Samarkand*, to the Foreign Office for clearance. But the Foreign Office demanded that he remove references to two sensitive government documents, which undermine official denials, to show that Britain had been aware it was receiving information obtained by the Uzbek authorities through torture. Rather than submit to the gagging order Mr Murray decided to publish the material on the internet.

The first document published by Mr Murray contains the text of several telegrams that he sent to London from 2002 to 2004, warning that the information being passed on by the Uzbek security services was torture-tainted, and challenging MI6 claims that the information was nonetheless "useful". The second document is the text of a Foreign Office legal opinion which argues that the use by intelligence services of information extracted through torture is not a violation of the UN Convention Against Torture.

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More detail in "The Register" blog..

The documents consist of a Foreign & Commonwealth Office legal opinion concerning evidence that may have been obtained by torture, and several letters sent by Murray to the FCO during his time as ambassador. These letters state that the use of torture is routine in Uzbekistan, that US policy there (which the UK supports) is focussed on oil, gas and hegemony rather than democracy or freedom, and that by knowingly receiving evidence obtained through torture the UK is in breach of the UN Convention on Torture. "With Tony Blair and Jack Straw cornered on extraordinary rendition," says Murray, "the UK Government is particularly anxious to suppress all evidence of our complicity in obtaining intelligence extracted by foreign torturers."

And indeed, in a July 2004 letter headed "Receipt of intelligence obtained under torture", he writes:

"It seems to me that there are degrees of complicity and guilt, but being at one or two removes does not make us blameless. There are other factors. Plainly it was a breach of Article 3 of the Convention for the coalition to deport detainees back here from Baghram, but it has been done. That seems plainly complicit."

There is little obvious in the documents that one would not be able to read at Human Rights Watch, or at the blog Murray started up after he ceased to be an FCO employee; the point, and the difficulty for the FCO, is that they establish who said what, to whom, when. Claims by the FCO and the Government in general that it does not procure evidence via torture and that it is unaware that torture is taking place can most kindly be viewed as superlatively disingenuous when seen against the background of Murray's letters. In order to sustain the 'see no evil' policy in the face of these, Jack Straw must presumably also now claim to have been entirely unaware of what one of his own ambassadors was telling him, repeatedly and at some considerable length.

Lack of knowledge on such monumental levels must prove seriously challenging to Straw - but he is not alone. Blairwatch (also one of the blogs publishing Murray's documents) does a neat piece of filleting of Tony Blair's claims of complete ignorance on extraordinary rendition here.

The profession of ignorance, frequently in wildly improbable circumstances, has stood the UK Government in good stead for some years now, and to a considerable degree this has been the case because the rules have meant that the insiders who know better have been unable to contradict the official line. But the likes of Murray present major problems to this system, because they decline to play by the rules.

And the likes of Murray plus Internet plus "dissident blogs" (Murray's expression) add up to a nightmare for the system. We should however see what's happening as a development, rather than an entirely new phenomenon. Pre-Internet the Spycatcher affair illustrated the impossibility of suppressing inconvenient information when the opposition declined to play ball, and the existence of the Internet has simply made it faster and simpler for leakers and whistleblowers to make attempts to suppress troublesome documents utterly futile.

Murray's breakthrough, essentially, is to have harnessed blogging networks to make the dissemination of the documents faster still, and far more horribly public. Conventional news media (among which, for the purposes of this article, we choose to count ourselves) are conscious that they present a clear target that Government lawyers can shoot at; they therefore circle the documents warily, but

do not usually publish them. Bloggers, au contraire, have strength in numbers, jurisdictional opacity and lack of visible assets. The Government now therefore has to figure out how it can extricate itself from this without looking too ridiculous, while being all too aware that trying to make an example of Murray or half a dozen sample bloggers would simply make it look more ridiculous still.

As Spycatcher and numerous other ham-fisted attempts at suppression have shown, attempts to muzzle people who don't want to be muzzled simply make their allegations far more widely-known, and their book sales considerable greater. This isn't a lesson Governments seem to be terribly good at learning, but one could perhaps hope that Murray's automation of the process will go some way towards driving the message home.

[link](#)

And "Twilight", on UK Indymedia, writes thus:

For Blair, 'bad news' is actually good news!
30.12.2005 18:07

Today, the British people hear the news that Blair's Jewish Warlord, Jack Straw, is responsible for a worldwide policy of torture against Muslims. Of course, for most of us here, this is old news.

One might think that as the majority of British people learn that "we are the Nazis", there might be some chance of preventing the horrific crimes that Blair is poised to carry out. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jan 1 sees the UK officially turned into a police state (I trust you are all aware of the new police powers that come into effect). The momentum of Blair's intentions is growing at an extraordinary pace, while the dribblers boast of carol singers unarrested (Hitler didn't bother to harrass useless and harmless protesters either- see if you can figure out why).

No, the game is a psychological one, that you can think of as following the rules of an abused family. If the abuser knows what he is doing, the very acts of abuse that he carries out mold and bind his 'loved ones'. His victims know more than anyone the nature of the monster that dominates their household, but perversely this gives them less choice, not more. Never forget that Blair today is more powerful and secure in his position than he has ever been.

Know this- in the abused family, the wife and kids dream of their monster being hit by a bus, or choking on his own vomit, and this 'false hope' allows them to foolishly tolerate their lives unchanged. Blair feeds false hope (every Christmas actually) straight into his Mass Media, allowing his 'family' to laugh along at carefully placed psy-ops on the BBC about Blair being 'tired' or some such bullsh*t (I hope you all got your dose of 'Doctor Who'- old Goebbels would have been so proud, but then he had first hand experience of how simple minded people are, and how easily led to their own doom).

Blair, and his goons, are directly responsible for some of the worst crimes the Human Race has seen, and these crimes are magnifying in number day by day. Where exactly do each of you think this is going to end? Certainly NOT in a happy new year!

[link and scroll down](#)

2 comments

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This is a huge story...

by stopwar on 30.12.2005 [19:11]

so far successfully kept off the main UK TV news but its only a matter of time. A zillion cheers for Craig Murray.

The 2002/2003 memos make mincemeat of this statement:

by stopwar on 30.12.2005 [19:43]

"... the British government does not support torture in any circumstances. Full stop. We do not support the obtaining of intelligence by torture, or its use."

Jack Straw, during the 2005 General Election campaign. How long before Jack Straw resigns I wonder.

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