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The Sunday Times

February 12, 2006

CIA chief sacked for opposing torture

SARAH BAXTER AND MICHAEL SMITH, WASHINGTON

The CIA's top counter-terrorism official was fired last week because he opposed detaining Al-Qaeda suspects in secret prisons abroad, sending them to other countries for interrogation and using forms of torture such as "water boarding", intelligence sources have claimed.

Robert Grenier, head of the CIA counter-terrorism centre, was relieved of his post after a year in the job. One intelligence official said he was "not quite as aggressive as he might have been" in pursuing Al-Qaeda leaders and networks.

Vincent Cannistraro, a former head of counter-terrorism at the agency, said: "It is not that Grenier wasn't aggressive enough, it is that he wasn't 'with the programme'. He expressed misgivings about the secret prisons in Europe and the rendition of terrorists."

Grenier also opposed "excessive" interrogation, such as strapping suspects to boards and dunking them in water, according to Cannistraro.

Porter Goss, who was appointed head of the CIA in August 2004 with a mission to "clean house", has been angered by a series of leaks from CIA insiders, including revelations about "black sites" in Europe where top Al-Qaeda detainees were said to have been held.

In last Friday's New York Times, Goss wrote that leakers within the CIA were damaging the agency's ability to fight terrorism and causing foreign intelligence organisations to lose confidence. "Too many of my counterparts from other countries have told me, 'You Americans can't keep a secret'."

Goss is believed to have blamed Grenier for allowing leaks to occur on his watch.

Since the appointment of Goss, the CIA has lost almost all its high-level directors amid considerable turmoil.

AB "Buzzy" Krongard, a former executive director of the CIA who resigned shortly after Goss's arrival,

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said the leaks were unlikely to stop soon, despite proposals to subject officers to more lie detector tests.

Krongard said it was up to President George Bush to stop the rot. "The agency has only one client: the president of the United States," he said. "The reorganisation is the way this president wanted it. If he is unwilling to reform it, the agency will go on as it is."

"History will judge how good an idea it was to destroy the teams and the programmes that were in place."



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