

It's official: Red Cross report says Bush Administration tortured prisoners

03/16/2009 @ 8:57 am

Filed by John Byrne

Graphic report describes inhumane tactics

US interrogators attached detainees to collars like dogs and used their leashes to slam them against walls, forced them to stand for days wearing only diapers, and tied detainees necks with towels and threw them against plywood walls, according to accounts in a secret 2007 report issued by the Red Cross to be printed in a New York magazine and leaked on Monday.



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The report -- issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross and kept secret for the last two years -- is the first first-hand document to legally say the Bush Administration's harsh interrogation techniques "constituted torture." They strongly imply that CIA interrogators violated international law.

The Red Cross was the only organization to get access to high-value detainees that were transferred to Guantanamo Bay from secret prisons US in 2006. It contains accounts from the prisoners, who were held in different locations but offered remarkably uniform tales of abuse at the hands of US agents.

Techniques amounted to "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment," the report states. Such treatment is explicitly barred by the Geneva Conventions.

The Red Cross report is perhaps the most harrowing to date in describing what appear to be routine US practices authorized by the Bush Administration. They include beatings, sleep deprivation, extreme temperatures, collaring and simulated drowning.

But the report goes further: Prisoners were routinely beaten, stripped, doused with freezing water and loud music, and kept awake for days with their arms shackled above them, wearing only diapers.

"On a daily basis . . . a collar was looped around my neck and then used to slam me against the walls of the interrogation room," the report quotes detainee Walid Muhammad bin Attash, as saying,

according to a story today. He was wrapped in a plastic sheet, he said, as cold water was "poured onto my body with buckets."

"I would be wrapped inside the sheet with cold water for several minutes," he said. "Then I would be taken for interrogation."

One captive said his neck was tied with a towel and then he was repeatedly swung into a plywood wall mounted in his cell. He was often slapped in the face and then placed in a coffin-like wooden box and forced to crouch with his air supply restricted.

"The stress on my legs held in this position meant my wounds both in my leg and stomach became very painful," he told the Red Cross.

Afterward -- as if this wasn't enough -- he was waterboarded by being strapped to what looked like a hospital bed.

"A black cloth was then placed over my face and the interrogators used a mineral bottle to pour water on the cloth so that I could not breathe," he said.

"I struggled against the straps, trying to breathe, but it was hopeless," he added. "I thought I was going to die."

The Washington Post [said Monday](#) that at least five copies of the report had been shared with the CIA and top White House officials in 2007, but barred from public release by ICRC guidelines intended to preserve the group's policy of neutrality in conflicts.

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The paper quotes an unnamed US official familiar with the report as saying that "it is important to bear in mind that the report lays out claims made by the terrorists themselves."

The report was obtained by Mark Danner, a journalism professor and author who published extensive excerpts in the April 9 edition of the *New York Review of Books*.