

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

As a means to an end, are the use of enhanced interrogation techniques and secret military operations in a foreign country justified?

### TORTURE IS IMMORAL, ILLEGAL AND INEFFECTIVE

By Rana Odeh

Let's get rid of the sophisticated, politically correct language and call it what it is: "enhanced interrogation techniques" simply means torture. The sugar coating around the word has softened the public's view on torture, despite the fact that it is immoral and illegal under U.S. law as well as international law. The use of the term "enhanced interrogation techniques" was introduced by the Bush administration in an attempt to legalize the use of torture. In a study conducted by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, researchers found that newspapers almost uniformly described waterboarding as torture dating back to the 1930s, but since it was revealed as a common tactic approved under the Bush administration, the same newspapers almost entirely stopped using the term torture. The study also found that while the New York Times had previously characterized waterboarding as torture in 81.5 percent of articles, from 2002 to 2008 it characterized waterboarding as torture in only 1.4 percent of articles. The corporate media was an active collaborator with the Bush administration in making "enhanced interrogation techniques" acceptable to the general public.

There has been a great amount of controversy surrounding the Bush administration's use of torture, but morality issues aside, the recent debate on torture is primarily focused on effectiveness. Ten years of arrests and interrogations, 10 years of waterboarding and Gitmo, 10 years of war in Afghanistan, 10 years of inefficiency and now bin Laden has finally been found. Before we ask whether enhanced interrogation techniques are justified as a means to an end, we must question whether torture is the most effective means to an end. If torture actually led to the capture of the world's most wanted man, it would be a totally different question than it is in this case; if torture were effective, it would not have taken 10 years to find bin Laden. Torture has not awarded the Bush administration with bin Laden's capture, nor did it solve any of the world's problems. What it did do, however, is violate human rights, the U.S. Constitution and international law.

New York Congressman Peter King claimed that "Osama Bin Laden would not have been captured and killed if it were not for the initial information we got from Khalid Sheikh Mohammed after he was waterboarded." On the contrary, Matthew Alexander, a former senior military interrogator and author of "Kill or Capture" (2011), said that the use of torture has consistently resulted in wasted resources and a false lead. Alexander also said, "When you look at the use of waterboarding and enhanced interrogation techniques in the case of the trail of evidence that leads to Osama bin Laden, what you find is, time and time again, it slows down the chase. In 2003, when we have Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, we have the person most likely to be able to lead us to bin Laden, and yet we don't get to him until 2011. You know,

by any interrogation standard, eight years is a long time to not get information from people and that's probably directly related to the fact that he was waterboarded 183 times."

In a press briefing on May 3, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney announced that the Obama administration has not changed its opposition to torture whatsoever, and stated that "reporting from detainees was just a slice of the information that has been gathered by incredibly diligent professionals over the years in the intelligence community. And it's simply strange credulity to suggest that a piece of information that

“Torture has not awarded the Bush administration with bin Laden's capture, nor did it solve any of the world's problems.”

may or may not have been gathered eight years ago somehow directly led to a successful mission on Sunday. That's just not the case.”

Despite what many torture advocates would like to believe, the killing of Osama Bin Laden is not credited to "enhanced interrogation techniques" which have proven to slow down the chase, but rather, it is credited to traditional intelligence-gathering methods. It is simply unrealistic to expect your enemy to reveal valuable information under torture. The act of torture itself confirms the animosity in the detainee's mind and makes him/her less likely to cooperate.

According to the statistics found by the Department of Defense, torture was the number one recruiting tool for al-Qaida and it created the most dangerous type of enemy. The foreign fighters in Iraq said they went to fight because of the events of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo; it is important to note that the foreign fighters made up 90 percent of the suicide bombers. It would be extremely dangerous for America to develop the reputation as a nation that uses torture, for many reasons, but the most prominent being that it would create a world of enemies that would under no circumstances help advance the security of the U.S.

There is ample evidence proving that torture is ineffective. It is an insult to the American intelligence community to assume the use of torture is necessary or even helpful in completing a mission. The U.S. military must stick with traditional intelligence-gathering techniques that have proven to be effective for decades. It is unreasonable to justify something that is immoral, illegal and ineffective.

Rana Odeh is a graduate of the University of Dayton with a degree in English and Philosophy. Her research and writings focus on issues of race, class and gender. She can be reached at [RanaOdeh@daytoncitypaper.com](mailto:RanaOdeh@daytoncitypaper.com).



### ACTING IN OUR OWN SELF INTEREST IN A DANGEROUS WORLD

By David H. Landon

In what can only be described as a testament to the ultimate capability of the U.S. military and intelligence community, Osama bin Laden is dead. On May 2, in the dead of a moonless night, our military flew four modified stealth-like Black Hawk helicopters containing elite Special Forces Navy SEALs into Pakistan airspace. Flying under the Pakistani radar, the small U.S. force made a surgical strike at the compound where bin Laden was hiding. It turns out that for years he had been hiding in the military town of Abbottabad, which is located only two hours drive north of the capital city of Islamabad. The SEALs dispatched bin Laden with two bullets to the head. For justifiable reasons, it would appear the plan was to kill the al-Qaida leader rather than capture him.

Killing bin Laden saved the Obama administration from the awkward situation of what to do with the mastermind of 9/11 once he was in captivity. Where would the U.S. hold bin Laden? To take him to the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay would expose the administration to the hypocrisy of their campaign to demonize the U.S. for operating Gitmo during the Bush presidency. President Obama and Attorney General Holder's previously held position on Guantanamo, both when Bush was president and after taking office, was that keeping these prisoners in a military prison off U.S. soil somehow violated the rights of these enemy combatants. Political sniping at President Bush was easier than protecting our national interest. According to the Obama/Holder doctrine, capturing Osama bin Laden and bringing him onto U.S. soil would require the U.S.

“Was the use of these techniques justified? Absolutely, it was justified.”

grant due process rights to bin Laden. By their own distorted rhetoric on the manner in which we may treat enemy combatants, if bin Laden were held on U.S. soil, there would have been a criminal trial in some U.S. District Court and it would have been a drawn-out circus of an affair.

The other obvious problem of a trial on U.S. soil would have been the immense danger to citizens here and around the world. It was a hostage situation waiting to happen. Anywhere a U.S. citizen might be found, they could be kidnapped and held hostage in exchange for bin Laden's release. The world is better off that SEAL Team 6 was forced to kill bin Laden rather than take him alive. How we found him has opened a new debate on the use of the enhanced interrogation techniques that were sanctioned by the Bush administration and ended by Obama's.

The investigation into locating and killing bin Laden got its first break after we obtained crucial intelligence by subjecting several high-level detainees to waterboarding. The Obama administration has, in the aftermath of the strike, acknowledged that CIA interrogators in secret overseas prisons developed the first strands of information on bin Laden's whereabouts. Of all of the detainees in captivity, only three high-level detainees were waterboarded. Current and former U.S. officials say

that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the true mastermind of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, provided the pseudonym of one of bin Laden's most trusted aides. This aide was in fact bin Laden's personal courier who traveled back and forth between bin Laden and his operatives, passing out orders and the plans of al-Qaida's ongoing attacks on the West.

The CIA got similar information from Mohammed's successor, Abu Faraj al-Libi. Both of these terrorists were subjected to waterboarding by the Bush administration inside CIA prisons in Poland and Romania. Once they had the *nom de guerre*, they were able to use the authorization granted under the Patriot Act to direct electronic surveillance to finding the real name of the courier. When phone calls using his name were detected it wasn't long before the U.S. had their target. The picture became crystal clear to the U.S. intelligence forces in August of last year that bin Laden was hiding in plain sight in the Pakistani town of Abbottabad. There are some reports that once they determined a high probability of his whereabouts, Hillary Clinton, Leon Panetta, Robert Gates and David Petraeus were all were urging the president to act before bin Laden moved again. It took President Obama from August until the beginning of May to finally act on the intelligence and to close the net around bin Laden.

The success of the limited use of enhanced interrogation techniques is now for all to see. The only three terrorists upon which the method was used are all alive, with maybe only their egos worse for the wear. This extraction of valuable intelligence using this method should support the case that far from being inhumane or unconscionable, the Bush administration's decision to treat terrorists as terrorists not only helped save lives, but directly contributed to tracking down bin Laden. Was the use of these techniques justified? Absolutely, it was justified.

I can respect John McCain's position in denouncing enhanced interrogation techniques. He is likely the only public official who has actually been tortured. But I respectfully disagree with his assessment that these techniques didn't work. By all accounts Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was singing like a bird after his waterboarding experience.

The second issue of whether or not the U.S. violated Pakistan's sovereignty is a non-starter: This terrorist was living comfortably among the Pakistanis for a number of years. They can't seriously contend that they didn't know that he was there. Our previously-stated doctrine trumps their national borders. We suggested after 9/11 that on this issue, you were either with us or against us. Any state that harbors terrorists is against us. Pakistan's harboring of bin Laden was unacceptable. The action taken by Obama to fly into Pakistan and kill bin Laden was correct.

David H. Landon is the former Chairman of the Montgomery County Republican Party Central Committee. He can be reached at [DaveLandon@daytoncitypaper.com](mailto:DaveLandon@daytoncitypaper.com).

