

CIA releases declassified documents on interrogations

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When the Senate Intelligence Committee released its so-called "torture report" in 2014 slamming the Central Intelligence Agency over its harsh interrogation program for terror suspects, CIA Director John Brennan memorably declared: "I think there is more than enough transparency that has happened over the last couple of days....I think it's over the top."

A year and a half later, under pressure from at least two Freedom of Information Act lawsuits, the spy agency is pulling back the curtain further on the Rendition, Detention and Interrogation Program by releasing [declassified versions of 50 documents](#) related to the controversial effort.

The newly disclosed CIA records show internal signs of concern about the program ranging from nervousness to disgust. One memo urged people not to make written records of their worries that aspects of the interrogation effort might be illegal.

"Strongly urge that any speculative language as to the legality of given activities or, or more precisely, judgment calls as their legality vis-a-vis operational guidelines for this activity agreed upon and vetted at the most senior levels of the agency, be refrained from in written traffic (e-mail or cable traffic). Such language is not helpful," the August 2002 memo said. (Names and titles are generally deleted from the records.)

"This morning I informed the front office [of CIA's Counterterrorism Center] that I will no longer be associated in any way with the interrogation program due to serious reservation I have about the current state of affairs," one CIA official wrote in a January 22, 2003 email. "Instead, I will be retiring shortly. This is a train wreck [sic] waiting to happen and I intend to get the hell off the train before it happens."

The records posted online Tuesday also include [a report on an internal investigation](#) into the death of a detainee at a CIA-run interrogation site called the Salt Pit in Afghanistan in November 2002. The report concludes that the prisoner, Gul Rahman, died after being shackled to a bare concrete floor in a detention cell while wearing only a

sweatshirt in 31-degree weather.

"Rahman was nude from the waist down," the report says. "Rahman had been nude, with the exception of a diaper for most of his incarceration. There is uncertainty as to when Rahman's diaper had been removed."

During a 4 A.M. cell block check, a guard saw Rahman "shaking," but that didn't seem odd to the guard "because all of the prisoners shake," the report says.

At 10 A.M., Rahman was motionless and on further checking had "a small amount of blood coming from his nose and mouth." CPR failed and it took 30-45 minutes to get a doctor to the scene. An autopsy was inconclusive, but the doctor involved said the likely cause was hypothermia. No photographs of the death scene were taken, the report says.

Rahman's death led to years of further investigation by the U.S. government. An initial Justice Department investigation during the George W. Bush administration resulted in no charges being filed.

In 2009, Attorney General Eric Holder ordered the Rahman case and other detainee abuse claims re-investigated. Rahman's death was one of two that resulted in grand jury investigations, but ultimately no charges were ever filed.

Holder has called for greater disclosure of the reasons charges were not filed, but the Justice Department is fighting a FOIA lawsuit seeking that type of information.

The records published Tuesday also include a draft of a highly unusual request from CIA to the Justice Department for a promise in advance that no one would be charged criminally for waterboarding an Al Qaeda operative known as Abu Zubaydah. It's unclear if any such promise was ever given.

Most of the documents are heavily redacted. One memo containing reflections of a CIA medical officer on the interrogation program is marked "page denied" on virtually every page.

The Rahman report and the other records were released in response to Freedom of Information suits filed by [Vice News reporter Jason Leopold](#) and by the American Civil Liberties Union. Both sought documents referenced in the 2012 Senate Intelligence Committee report.

"These newly declassified records add new detail to the public record of the CIA's torture program and underscore the cruelty of the methods the agency used in its secret, overseas black sites," ACLU attorney Jameel Jaffer said. "It bears emphasis that these records document grave crimes for which no senior official has been held accountable."
