



CIA TORTURE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE 119 DETAINEES?



About the Bureau of Investigative Journalism

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism is an independent not-for-profit research unit established in April 2010. It pursues journalism that is of public benefit, undertaking in depth research into the governance of public, private and third sector organisations and their influence. The Bureau takes on long term projects which are focused on uncovering or highlighting a systemic wrong. The Bureau has gained a reputation for its four year project tracking US drone strikes in covert war situations. In this new project the Bureau is examining one of the darkest periods of the CIA's history. The project is supported by the [Freedom of the Press Foundation](#), through a crowdfunding initiative. To learn more visit thebureauinvestigatives.com

About The Rendition Project

The Rendition Project is a collaborative research initiative run by Dr Ruth Blakeley at the University of Kent and Dr Sam Raphael at Kingston University. Working closely with a number of other organisations, in particular the legal action charity Reprieve and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, this project aims to bring academic expertise to bear in order to research the CIA's rendition, detention and interrogation (RDI) programme. The Rendition Project is at the forefront of efforts to investigate and understand the use of rendition, secret detention and torture by the CIA and its allies in the "war on terror". The Rendition Project has been funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). To learn more visit therenditionproject.org.uk

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1. Executive Summary

After three months' research between the Bureau of Investigative Journalism and The Rendition Project, we are able to publish for the first time [comprehensive profiles of all 119 prisoners put through the CIA's detention and interrogation programme](#).

Our research has determined:

- The nationalities of 76 detainees, while 43 remain unknown
- That 101 were held for more than a month
- That 47 were held for more than a year
- That 37 ended up in Guantánamo Bay, while 29 remain there
- Seven detainees are now dead (one was killed in CIA custody; one died in Libyan custody; two were released by the CIA, one of whom later died, the other was killed in an airstrike; three escaped, one of whom was killed by a drone, one by an air strike and one killed in Iraq).

What became of 39 prisoners is still unknown. These important findings pave the way for our future research and investigative journalism.

[We are also publishing an infographic showing where detainees came from and where they were sent to.](#)

As part of our commitment to collaborative

working, we have made available for download the original dataset that underpins these findings and this graphic.

[This dataset](#) contains records of detainees' nationalities, capture locations, detention durations and a timeline of entry and exit for each individual. It shows which prisoners were handed over to military custody, who was released and who died.

The Bureau and The Rendition Project have built profiles of each detainee through analysis of the US Senate intelligence committee's summary report on CIA detention and interrogation, documents relating to military detention in Bagram and Guantánamo Bay, and media and NGO reporting.

The Senate committee published its report in December 2014 which provided new details about the programme. But questions remain and our research aims to plug those gaps.

In the coming months, we will try to determine what happened to the 39 prisoners whose current status has not been established.

Information published here is correct as of April 2015. Figures will change as the project progresses.

2. The CIA's detainees: Where did they come from?

Addressing a military tribunal in 2004, Abbar al Hawari gave an account of how he ended up being sent from the country of Georgia to CIA detention in April 2002. "The Americans didn't capture me," he said.

"The mafia captured me. They sold me to the Americans. They knew Americans were looking for Arabs, so they captured Arabs and sold them. Just like when someone catches a fish and sells it."

Our research has formed a picture of how detainees came into CIA detention.

Georgia is one of 18 countries we have identified as capture locations for CIA prisoners. Of the 119 detainees, the capture locations of 72 are now on record. Thirty-nine were picked up in Pakistan.

We have recorded four prisoners who were picked up in Iraq and three in Afghanistan, although it would be surprising if this number represented the full total of detainees captured in these countries.

One prisoner, German citizen Khaled el Masri, was captured in Europe. He was held incommunicado in a hotel in Skopje, in the Republic of Macedonia, before being handed over to US custody. The European Court of Human Rights recently ruled Macedonia had participated in his torture and disappearance, and awarded him damages of €60,000.

[A new report](#), submitted in April 2015 to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, describes evidence showing three of the 119 prisoners—Suleiman Abdullah, Muhammad Saleh and Hassan Ahmed Guleed—were all flown into CIA custody in Afghanistan through the tiny east African nation of Djibouti. Other capture locations included South Africa, Mauritania, Somalia, Indonesia and Thailand.

Prisoners were not always given over to the CIA directly after capture. Sanad al Kazimi, a Yemeni from Aden, was held for more than six months by the UAE security forces in undisclosed locations before his transfer to CIA detention. After a further nine months the CIA handed him on to the US military in Bagram. He remains in their custody in Guantánamo Bay today.

Rafiq al Hami was held in Iran then Afghan custody for almost a year before being transferred to the CIA programme.

In several cases, however, these periods represent proxy detention on the CIA's behalf rather than actual foreign custody.

Riyadh the Facilitator was held in Jordan for almost two years, and Ibn al Shaykh al Libi in Egypt for more than a year before they entered CIA custody, according to dates calculated from the Senate report.

It is clear, however, that the CIA had sent them to these countries in the first place, only later to bring them into its own prison network. Likewise, the CIA sent Binyam Mohamed to Morocco for a year and a half and then had him flown to its own prison in Afghanistan.

Once inside the programme, detainees entirely disappeared from public view. No records of their whereabouts were disclosed. They had no access to their families, lawyers or the International Committee of the Red Cross, which monitors prisoners interned during conflict.

In most cases these disappearances were for considerable periods. We know that 101 of the 119 were held by the CIA for more than 30 days, and 47 for more than a year. Of these, 23 were held for more than two years and 13 for more than three years.

One prisoner, Abu Zubaydah—the first detainee to enter the programme—was held by the CIA for 1,619 days, more than four years. The "enhanced interrogation techniques" the CIA's contractor psychologists devised for him swiftly became the blueprint for treatment of other prisoners. They included confinement in small boxes, days of sleep deprivation and 83 sessions of waterboarding.

CIA officials argued at the time it was essential to extract information from Abu Zubaydah because he was the "third or fourth" man in al Qaeda.

The Senate report makes clear, however, this information was already regarded as unreliable soon after his capture. The CIA eventually concluded he was not a member of al Qaeda. Abu Zubaydah remains in detention at Guantánamo Bay. He has never been charged with a crime.

3. Post-CIA detention: Where did they go?

Between October 2002 and June 2004, 35 detainees were transferred from CIA to US military custody at Bagram airbase, Afghanistan. Twenty-one of these were sent to Guantánamo Bay, while 14 remained in Bagram.

A further 16 were sent to Guantánamo directly from CIA detention—14 of them in September 2006 and two subsequently. The CIA released 12 prisoners and transferred 21 to foreign custody.

One, however, had already died in CIA hands. Gul Rahman was captured in October 2002. He was interrogated using a combination of:

“48 hours of sleep deprivation, auditory overload, total darkness, isolation, a cold shower, and rough treatment”.

Officials at headquarters suggested that further “enhanced” measures might be needed. Soon after, he was found dead from hypothermia, and naked except for a sweatshirt.

Just over a quarter of the detainees (34) are unaccounted for at point of exit from CIA custody. No public disclosure has been made as to whether they were released by the CIA or transferred to military or foreign custody. A further five detainees are unaccounted for in the years following their release.

The US government has never disclosed the names of all prisoners held at Bagram airbase, although one heavily redacted list—a snapshot of who was held there in September 2009—was released to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Other material obtained by the ACLU, giving further details of a sample group of Bagram prisoners, does not cover those formerly held by the CIA. Documents relating to Guantánamo detainees do sometimes note they had previously been in Bagram, however.

Four of the CIA’s former prisoners escaped from Bagram in a break-out in July 2005, which officials attributed to a “perfect storm” of mistakes by guards. According to reporting by the New York Times, they “picked the lock on their cell, changed out of their bright orange uniforms and made their way through a heavily guarded military base under the cover of night. They then crawled over a faulty wall where a

getaway vehicle was apparently waiting for them”. An American defence official [was quoted as saying](#):

“It is embarrassing and amazing at the same time. It was a disaster.”

Different names were given for the escapees, leading to some confusion. [Initial reporting stated](#) they were Abdullah from Syria, Mohammed al Qatari from Saudi Arabia, Mahmood Ahmad from Kuwait and Abulbakar Mohammed Hassan from Libya. The New York Times [named the four men](#) as Omar al Faruq, Muhammad Jafar Jamal al Kahtani, Abdullah Hashimi and Mahmoud Ahmad Muhammad.

However, by 2012, the New York Times [included](#) Abu Yahya al Libi among those who had escaped. Abu Yahya al Libi appears in the Senate report under his other name, [Hasan Muhammad Abu Bakr Qa’id](#). The names of the other three escapees appear in the Senate report as Umar Faruq, Muhammad Jafar Jamal al Qahtani and Abdullah Ashami.

Three were killed: Umar Faruq in September 2006, Abdullah Ashami in July 2008 and Hassan Qa’id in June 2012. Mohammed al Qahtani—not to be confused with the man of that name held at Guantánamo—was recaptured and, according to reports, transferred to Saudi Arabia. What happened to him next is unclear.

Six former CIA prisoners were released from Bagram by the military at a slow pace over several years, and two, Ridha Ahmad Najar and Lutfi al-Gharisi, were [handed over to the Afghan government](#) for continued detention in 2014.

At the start of 2006, the Department of Defense refused to take on board any more prisoners from the CIA’s programme. In talking-points prepared for the director, Porter Goss, CIA officials expressed concern that “we are stymied and the program could collapse of its own weight”. They argued that the CIA:

“Will have to begin transferring those detainees no longer producing intelligence to third countries, which may release them”.

Otherwise, the agency would simply have to release them itself. Eventually, the military did agree to hold the CIA’s “high value” detainees at Guantánamo Bay. Fourteen of these were transferred there in September 2006. Two final transfers into Guantánamo took place in April 2007 and March 2008.

Of the 37 prisoners who ended up in Guantánamo, 29 remain there. Among the eight who left, one—Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani—became the only CIA prisoner to date to have a trial in a US federal court. Transferred from Guantánamo to New York in 2009, he was charged with 285 counts of conspiracy and murder. He was acquitted of 284 of them. The jury [found him guilty](#) of one count of conspiracy to destroy government buildings and property. For this, [he received a life sentence](#).

Seven former CIA prisoners have been released from Guantánamo. Most were repatriated, while Rafiq al Hami was resettled in Slovakia.

4. Foreign custody

Just after midnight on August 27 2004, Laid Saidi touched down in Algiers on board a contracted Gulfstream jet. It marked the end of a 15-month period in which he was captured and interrogated by the US.

He had disappeared from his home in Tanzania in May 2003. At some stage later, at a safe-house in Afghanistan, CIA interrogators “submerged [him] in a bathtub filled with icy water”. [According to an account published in the New York Times](#), he was interrogated about a telephone conversation “in which he had allegedly talked about planes”.

But the conversation had in fact concerned tyres: analysts had been confused by Saidi’s mixing of English and Arabic.

The Senate report noted that after ice baths and “66 hours of standing sleep deprivation” he was “released because the CIA discovered he was likely not the person he was believed to be”.

Yet the confusion didn’t end there. The CIA had to release him twice. Saidi had been living in Tanzania on a Tunisian passport. In June 2004 the CIA sent him to Tunisia, but local security officials realised he was not Tunisian and had him sent back. He was held for another two and a half months in Afghanistan before his transfer to Algeria. He was then released without charge.

Saidi was one of 21 prisoners who, our findings show, were moved out of the detention system into other countries.

Given the military’s reluctance to provide an “endgame” for all the CIA’s remaining detainees, the fate of prisoners of lower perceived value

was largely in the hands of the CIA’s foreign partners. We have identified direct transfers to seven different countries—Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Jordan and Pakistan— although the Senate report makes clear that at least ten countries ended up holding former CIA detainees.

Some of these prisoners were swiftly released. Others were put on trial and sentenced, or held without trial, for lengths of time between a few weeks and several years.

Four Yemenis were released the year after their repatriation to Yemen. Of six Libyans sent back to Libya, [one](#) died in prison. The remainder were released during the 2011 revolution.

Two Palestinians—Marwan al-Jabbur and Samr el-Barq—were sent to Jordan and then on to Israel. While Jabbur was released, el-Barq remains in indefinite “administrative detention”. At the end of 2012, the Israeli Ministry of Justice disclosed that “several attempts were made to transfer Mr. Al Barq to several Arab countries, however up to date no Arab country has agreed to accept him”.

‘Ghost detainees’ in Iraq

At least one of the 119 prisoners was secretly transferred to US custody in Iraq, where he was held as a “ghost detainee”. Hiwa Abdul Rahman Rashul had been captured in Iraq in 2003. Rather than holding him there, the CIA transferred him to its site in Afghanistan. Months later the White House Office of Legal Counsel ruled him a “protected person” under the Fourth Geneva Convention and he had to be returned to Iraq. “The CIA was not happy with the decision, [according to two intelligence officials](#). It brought him back and suspended any other transfers out of the country.”

What happened next was exposed in June 2004 by Edward T Pound in [US News and World Report](#). Rashul was hidden, “his name never entered into the official roster of detainees” held by the military. Instead, he was referred to as “Triple X”. His presence was not to be disclosed to the Red Cross, a foreign government, or other prisoners.

Rashul seems to have held little interest for his captors. The former commander of the brigade holding him commented: “It was bizarre. He had been there a long time, and nobody was coming to see him, interrogate him.” Instead he was just “sitting there”.

The following year the CIA received confidential authorisation from the Justice Department to take Iraqis out of Iraq to be interrogated elsewhere for a “brief but not indefinite period”. Between March

and October 2004, [according to an intelligence official](#), the CIA used this authorisation “as legal support for secretly transporting as many as a dozen detainees out of Iraq”. It is not yet clear whether any of these prisoners are named in the Senate report.

Although 34 prisoners are unaccounted for at their point of exit from the CIA programme, this number rises over the following years. We know that Abu Naseem al Tunisi was moved from CIA custody to Bagram around May 2004, but not where he went after that—although we do know that he was still in Bagram in September 2009. What happened to Hiwa Abdul Rahman Rashul after he was hidden in Iraq (see box above) is unknown and we have found no source for al-Qahtani’s movements after his transfer to Saudi Arabia. Concerning al Jaza’iri, all that has been disclosed is that he went into foreign custody—but where, or what happened to him there, remains an open question.

5. Note on Dataset

The dataset published with this report, correct as of April 2015, summarises three months of research by The Bureau and The Rendition Project. The Senate committee’s report lists 119 detainees put through the CIA’s detention and interrogation programme. An updated list was released in February 2015.

Our investigation has calculated CIA custody entry and exit dates for each of the 119. These calculations are based on the observation the list is in chronological order by entry date. This implies each man entered the programme on the same day or after the previous prisoner, and on the same day or before the next one listed.

Although the Senate report gives few exact dates on which prisoners entered the programme, it gives numerous indicators. These include references to when “enhanced techniques” were first practised on individuals. In cases where a month is given but the day redacted, the size of the black redaction mark shows whether it is a single-digit or double-digit date.

Previous investigations—by legal teams, journalists and groups such as Reprieve, The Rendition Project, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Open Society Justice Initiative—have given dates of transfers into or out of the programme. In some cases these have been correlated with flight data from planes associated with the rendition programme.

In cases where testimony from released prisoners and known flight data intersects, we have used these dates as firm entry or exit points for those prisoners. In cases where exit dates have been attested by a combination of such sources, we have worked backwards to estimate a range of entry dates.

For the 37 prisoners sent to Guantánamo Bay, a date of transfer into military custody is generally included in the documents hosted on the New York Times’ Guantanamo docket. This date can be a useful indicator of exit date from CIA custody, but is rarely equivalent, since many CIA prisoners spent a period in military custody in Bagram before transfer to Guantánamo.

Occasionally the transfer date to Bagram is also documented, but more frequently it is only vaguely recorded (eg ‘May 2004’) or not recorded at all. The relative lack of transparency surrounding Bagram means that records of custody there are harder to come by.

In some cases, the Guantánamo docket or public source reporting offers firm capture dates for prisoners, but since many were captured by foreign governments or held outside the CIA programme for an initial period, their capture date rarely equates to their date of entry into CIA detention.

The Bureau’s reconstruction of entry and exit dates has erred on the side of caution, giving date ranges unless reliable and documented sources for precise dates have been published. We assume, in accordance with public source reporting, that no prisoners were held by the CIA on September 6 2006, and therefore that anyone captured before then had been transferred out of the programme by that date.

The Senate committee’s original prisoner chart was re-released owing to inconsistencies, first noted by the Bureau, in the number of days that each prisoner was held for. The committee explained that these had resulted from a technical error. Insofar as is possible, our research corroborates the accuracy of the detention durations given in the committee’s updated list.

The dataset includes 12 prisoners profiled by The Rendition Project who were rendered to detention elsewhere by the CIA, but who are not included in the Senate report.

We will continue to monitor the accuracy of the figures and correct where necessary.