

BLACK HOLES AND MOCK BURIAL

The other day, I posted on black holes in Bagram and Somalia. This important story, describes the plight of Tanzanian fisherman Suleiman Abdallah, who was kidnapped and sold for bounty in Mogadishu then rendered to three different American prisons, ultimately to Bagram, before he was freed five years later.

In addition to the portraying yet another innocent disappeared into our prison system, the story provides a few important details.

In fact, Suleiman was thousands of kilometers from his familiar Indian Ocean reefs, in an underground prison in central Afghanistan.

“It was pitch black, with constant noise and not enough food,” he recalled. His American interrogators **would pour freezing cold water on him** and beat him, saying, “We know you are a sea man, but here we have more water than out there in the sea. It never stops raining here.” Suleiman also describes being hung from the ceiling in the “strappado position,” slung in chains so that his toes just touched the floor. He also says American interrogators would take the ablution jug (used by Muslims for ritual cleansing before prayer), and stick its long spout up his rectum.

[snip]

The litany of abuses described by Suleiman included severe beatings, prolonged solitary confinement, forced nakedness and humiliation, sexual assault, **being locked naked in a coffin** and forced to lie on a wet mat, naked and handcuffed, and then **rolled up like a corpse**. It was extremely tough. There were times when both of us clinicians,

and the patient, broke down in tears.”
[my emphasis]

While Clare Gutteridge doesn't say it, the underground prison in Afghanistan sounds like the Salt Pit (Cage Prisoners says it was a different prison, but that he was then transferred to the Salt Pit). He was transferred to the relatively better Bagram in mid-2003.

In any case, that means the prisons in Afghanistan were using dousing after it may have contributed to Gul Rahman's death the previous year, and after the CIA IG investigation into torture started.

Then there's the mock burial—the only treatment John Yoo ever deemed torture. While Abdallah's torturers might call the coffin “small box confinement,” between that and the funeral shroud, the intent of the treatment seems fairly clear.

And remember: top Bush officials had reason to know this treatment would elicit false confessions. It sounds like CIA and FBI interrogators learned fairly early on Abdallah was not who they had thought he was (they originally believed he had a role in the 1998 Embassy bombings).

Were we using the methods that even John Yoo found to be illegal to invent some justification for kidnapping Abdallah?