

May 6, 2013

President Barack Obama
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Study of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program

Dear President Obama:

The undersigned organizations write about your administration's response to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's study of the former CIA detention and interrogation program. We understand that the CIA as well as other agencies have been invited to comment on the study. In order to ensure the Executive Branch response is as objective and comprehensive as possible, we strongly urge you to designate a senior White House official to coordinate a single Executive Branch response, incorporating the views of all the relevant agencies. We also urge that the White House independently review the study and that the coordinating official include the views of the White House in the response.

According to Senator John McCain, "At a moment when our country is once again debating the efficacy and morality of so-called 'enhanced interrogation' practices, this report has the potential to set the record straight once and for all."¹

As the primary agency under review, the CIA should of course be able to review and provide feedback on the Committee's report. But it is important the agency's view not be submitted without an independent analysis from other parts of the Executive Branch. Other agencies—including the FBI, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence—also have relevant knowledge of the CIA program and its effects, as does the White House itself.

Most importantly, your administration has a responsibility to ensure that the Executive Branch response to the study is not driven by individuals who might be implicated in the CIA's use of torture. While it is appropriate for individuals who have direct knowledge of the program to provide input, others with knowledge of the program should also be consulted. We urge you to ensure that a consolidated response representing the considered view of all parts of the Executive Branch is submitted to the Committee for review.

As one of your very first acts as President, you signed an Executive Order that closed the CIA's "black sites" and restricted the agency to the techniques in the Army Field Manual. Regrettably, former senior officials and supporters of past abusive policies continue to attack your decision by arguing that the

¹http://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressOffice.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=95e0a445-d569-80f9-f216-89ec7a7b6928&Region_id=&Issue_id=

former unlawful practices were necessary to save lives and keep the United States safe. As a result, fear and misinformation has dominated the public discourse.

This is in part because, in the words of Senate Intelligence Committee member Mark Udall at John Brennan's confirmation hearing, "[i]naccurate information on the ...effectiveness of the CIA's detention-interrogation program was provided by the CIA to the White House, the DOJ, Congress and the public. Some of this information is regularly and publicly repeated today by former CIA officials, either knowingly or unknowingly. And although we now know this information is incorrect, the accurate information remains classified, while inaccurate information has been declassified and regularly repeated."

We believe the public release of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence study is critical to upholding your 2009 Executive Order. Safeguarding your Executive Order from being overturned by a future administration or Congress will help ensure that the United States does not return to policies of torture and cruelty again.

We urge you to lead in these efforts now as you did then.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
Open Society Policy Center
Physicians for Human Rights
The Center for Victims of Torture
The Constitution Project