

# PANETTA: CONTRACTORS NOT ALLOWED TO INTERROGATE (ANymore)

Leon Panetta just wrote a letter to Congress assuring them that contractors will not be used for interrogations.

The Central Intelligence Agency has banned contractors from conducting interrogations, CIA Director Leon Panetta told lawmakers in a letter Thursday outlining the agency's dismantling of several Bush-era policies.

The letter and an accompanying memo to CIA employees were the fullest explanation to date of how the agency is carrying out President Barack Obama's executive order of Jan. 22 ending the CIA's "black site" program that detained terror suspects.

One flashpoint in that program was the use of outside contractors to interrogate suspects. Under congressional pressure, Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair recently said he was reviewing that policy and added that government employees should handle the most important detainees.

Mr. Panetta went further, saying flatly: "No CIA contractors will conduct interrogations."

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An intelligence official said the contractor ban doesn't extend to support of interrogations. "If a contractor has,

say, special language skills, it's conceivable that he or she could be asked to support a debriefing," the official said.

Read the whole argument, as it includes easily parsed reassurances that the CIA is out of the black site business as well.

Panetta did not mention, apparently, whether or not the contractors who designed our torture system were still on contract.