

IN ANNOUNCING SUPPORT FOR DECLASSIFYING REPORT, SUSAN COLLINS USES WORD “TORTURE”

It is fairly big – and welcome – news that, along with Angus King, Susan Collins will support the release of the Senate Torture Report. Collins’ vote will give the report the patina of bipartisanship, which will therefore increase its legitimacy among the chattering classes.

Just as welcome, however, is the language the Maine Senators use to describe what CIA did.

We remain strongly opposed to the use of torture, believing that it is fundamentally contrary to American values. While we have some concerns about the process for developing the report, its findings lead us to conclude that some detainees were subjected to techniques that constituted torture. This inhumane and brutal treatment never should have occurred. Further, the report raises serious concerns about the CIA’s management of this program.

Our vote to declassify this report does not signal our full endorsement of all of its conclusions or its methodology. The report has some intrinsic limitations because it did not involve direct interviews of CIA officials, contract personnel, or other Executive branch personnel. It also, unfortunately, did not include the participation of the staff of Republican Committee members. We do, however, believe in transparency and believe that

the Executive Summary, and Additional and Dissenting Views, and the CIA's rebuttal should be made public with appropriate redactions so the American public can reach their own conclusions about the conduct of this program.

Torture is wrong, and we must make sure that the misconduct and the grave errors made in the CIA's detention and interrogation program never happen again. [my emphasis]

Two of the last weathervanes of right-centrism have deemed it acceptable to use the word "torture" to describe what the CIA did, a word most of the nation's press still refuses to use for fear it will affect their claim to objectivity.

If Susan Collins can use the word torture, then can the other institutions that aspire to be such measures of centrism also do so?