

# THE CIA'S EXCUSE: HIDING THE DOUBLE AGENTS

Adam Goldman and Greg Miller offer the CIA's excuse for removing documents from the SCIF where they had been made available to Senate Intelligence Committee staffers: they had to hide their double agents.

After the CIA provided a massive cache of documents in 2009 to Senate staffers investigating the agency's detention and interrogation program, the agency realized it might have a problem.

Within those documents, agency employees feared, were details that could lead to the exposure of CIA sources, former U.S intelligence officials said. Among them were top assets who had been recruited while being held at a secret CIA facility on Guantanamo Bay called "Penny Lane," according to one of the officials.

So great was the concern that the sources' identity would be disclosed that the CIA withdrew some of the documents from a special facility that had been set up for members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

[snip]

Two employees of the CIA's Counterterrorism Center and a lawyer were assigned to scrub the documents for sensitive sources, including the asset who agreed to work for the CIA after his capture and transfer to Guantanamo, the official said.

The assets went through a recruitment program at Guantanamo that began in early 2003 and ended several years

later. Some of those who took part in the program have provided key information to the CIA, helping the agency kill a number of top terrorists.

Let's take the CIA at its word for a minute and consider the implications of this from the standpoint of oversight.

By removing the names of those the CIA had flipped while at Gitmo, the CIA permitted politically motivated people – including the guy who had a key role in “releasing” them – to call those detainees “recidivists.” While it might be great cover to have Dick Cheney screaming about what dangerous people these people were, it was lethal for Obama's effort to close Gitmo.

By hiding the names of the double agents, the CIA also hid the true details about the actions those double agents would go on to commit. Which may have permitted CIA to use those double agents in ways that weren't just intelligence gathering.

Hiding double agents also hid how corrupt the entire military commission program was, because it hid the degree to which detainees had been implicated – and were still being held years after their capture – solely through the testimony of informants.

I wonder. Has CIA yet given its oversight committees a full list of all those CIA believes to have flipped? For a number of reasons, I doubt they have.

Removing details on the effort to flip detainees also hides evidence about the purpose of torture, which wasn't really to obtain intelligence, but to exploit detainees, whether that involved propaganda (such as eliciting the justification for the Iraq War) or developing assets. Until we understand that that was one of the reasons we embraced torture and other kinds of humiliation, we won't be able to account for the full human waste of it all.

One more detail: by claiming it took back evidence of flipping detainees, CIA can obscure what happened with Hassan Ghul, whose cooperation with the US Miller first broke. If this report ever comes out in any halfway revelatory form, Ghul's treatment may well be one of the most unjustifiable (particularly since he had already given up Osama bin Laden by the time we started torturing him). How convenient, then, that CIA is prepping to claim SSCI doesn't know everything about Ghul's treatment.