

## Torture or Interrogation?

Webster's dictionary defines torture as the following:

*Function: noun*

*Etymology: French, from Late Latin tortura, from Latin tortus, past participle of torquere to twist; probably akin to Old High German drAhsil turner, Greek atraktos spindle*

**1 a :** anguish of body or mind : AGONY **b :** something that causes agony or pain

**2 :** the infliction of intense pain (as from burning, crushing, or wounding) to punish, coerce, or afford sadistic pleasure

**3 :** distortion or overrefinement of a meaning or an argument :

STRAINING

Likewise interrogation is defined as follows:

*Function: transitive verb*

*Inflected Form(s): -gat·ed; -gat·ing*

*Etymology: Latin interrogatus, past participle of interrogare, from inter- + rogare to ask -- more at RIGHT*

**1 :** to question formally and systematically

**2 :** to give or send out a signal to (as a transponder) for triggering an appropriate response

In the past several weeks and months since the revelation of improprieties at Abu Ghraib prison and Guantánamo Bay, there has been much discussion regarding the issue of torture of captured terrorists. Opponents of torture, such as Senator John McCain of Arizona, have been very vocal in criticizing the administration of President Bush for its apparent indifference towards the right of the United States military to use harsh and sometimes questionable methods of interrogating suspected terrorists. While Senator McCain objects to the use of torture on moral grounds, as he himself was tortured while a prisoner of war in Vietnam, it would seem that there is a far greater good to be accomplished for the sake of national security and safety of our citizens by using whatever means necessary to extract information from terrorists with respect to potential attacks on the United States or its interests.

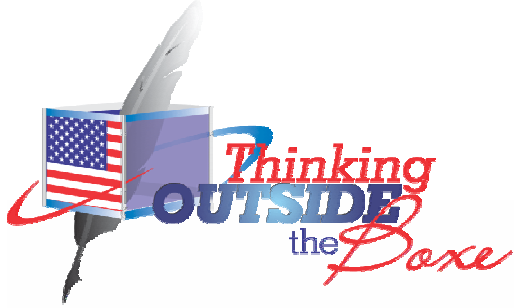
Senator McCain's position, while commendable, misses a fundamental point that differentiates the current situation from that in which the United States found itself during the Vietnam War. It is important to note that the above definition from Webster's indicates that torture involves the infliction of pain for sadistic pleasure. Senator McCain's captors were likely seeking both sadistic

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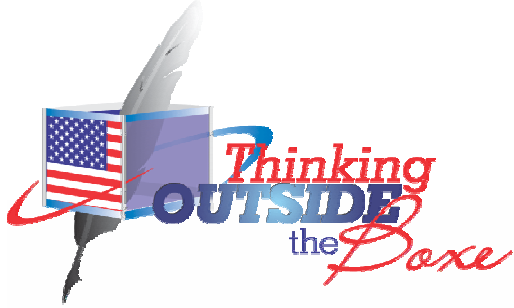
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pleasure as well as information regarding US military operations in Vietnam through inhumane and cruel torture and interrogation. He was a military prisoner of war, not a civilian who was captured by enemy forces. While his military status does not in and of itself make his torture right, this can clearly be differentiated from cases where innocent civilians are captured and ruthlessly and cruelly tortured and ultimately murdered. The terrorists who perpetuate these heinous crimes and document their sadistic acts of torture on videotape, which is then broadcast over the Internet and on Arab television networks, are not military personnel but are, rather, dangerous fanatics who lack respect for human life, particularly of innocent civilians, and who are willing to go to any extreme to perpetuate their desire to invoke fear in the civilized world.

The crimes of the terrorists are all of the most heinous nature and must surely rank with the crimes committed by the Nazis during World War II. Their acts are committed with the intention of striking fear in innocent peoples throughout the world. Their acts are indeed crimes against humanity. They have no regard for the work of civilians and peacekeepers. They derive a sick and twisted pleasure from the atrocious acts that they commit against those innocent people who they have captured. There are no limits, no bounds, to the atrocities that they are willing to commit in an effort to further their hatred towards the West and the civilized world. They torture, they kill, and they have no remorse for the terrible deeds that they commit.

No rational person can draw a just comparison between what the terrorists do to their prisoners and what happened at Abu Ghraib or Guantánamo Bay. The prisoners at Guantánamo Bay are enemy combatants; they are more than likely terrorists or individuals who have known links to terrorist organizations that seek to harm America and its people. Most of the prisoners were captured during the US military's campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is likely that some or all of those prisoners may have knowledge relevant to the government's continuing investigation into potential terrorist acts. The information that those prisoners have in their possession may enable our intelligence community, our military, or our law enforcement personnel to prevent another terrorist attack on American soil or against American allies, and thereby save the lives of many innocent people.

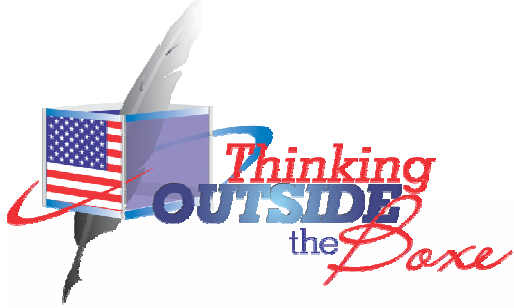


It is therefore reasonable to believe that our military and our intelligence agencies have the right to interrogate these prisoners using whatever means necessary to extract that information from those suspected terrorists or terrorist affiliates. This is interrogation that may include harsh measures such as sleep deprivation, tests of the physical and mental endurance, etc. While some may call this torture, we do not derive any sick or sadistic pleasure from these interrogation techniques. We as Americans and as a civilized society do not derive any pleasure or satisfaction from the senseless torture of civilian prisoners or enemy combatants. Though our acts may be harsh, these interrogation techniques may be necessary to save the lives of many innocent people.

The photographs of the abuses of certain prisoners at Abu Ghraib were repulsive. But these were acts that were carried out by a few individuals who took advantage of their positions to perpetuate unnecessary non-interrogation acts against the prisoners and who disgraced the uniform of the United States military that they wore. Those responsible for those acts were punished for their deeds. But to say that photographs of prisoners in indecent positions were indicative of systemic torturous procedures is a severe misrepresentation of the situation. These pictures and these deeds were indecent. Allegations of desecration of the Koran that were widely publicized in the media ultimately turned out to be false. Here, the media was a guilty of a great disservice to the people. The ubiquitous coverage of the photographs and other allegations served only to stoke the fires of hatred that drive the terrorists and radical, religious, Islamic fundamentalists. The media's coverage of this issue was irresponsible. It would have been far more prudent to have allowed an internal investigation conducted by the Department of Defense to deal with the issue of prisoner abuse, not torture. The media, notorious for poor judgment, would better serve the world and our efforts in the war on terror with a more judicious reporting of events relating to the questioning and interrogation of enemy combatants, suspected terrorists, or known terrorists and their affiliates.

To be sure, we as Americans, and indeed the civilized world, are above torturing captured civilians, military personnel, and enemy combatants. To stand against torture is a noble ambition. To prevent our military and intelligence operatives from using harsh techniques to interrogate enemy combatants and suspected terrorists captured in this war against terror is to open ourselves to further

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devastating terrorist attacks that may cost thousands of lives. The terrorists do not play by the rules. They will stop at no end to achieve their goals. It is like playing cards where the dealer has a stacked deck. This is not to say that we should give up our principles and condone acts that inflict pain and suffering on innocent individuals for sadistic pleasures. But we must not allow international public opinion or the opinion of the media and their backers who may have hidden political agendas to prevent us from engaging in interrogation techniques that may be harsh in our efforts to collect information from enemy combatants about terrorist plots or information relating to the war on terror.