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Torture Report Suggests Interrogation Supplied False Intelligence Used to Justify 2003 Invasion of Iraq

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A Senate investigation into the CIA's use of brutal interrogation practices released Tuesday suggests that at least one detainee supplied false intelligence contributing to erroneous claims by the Bush administration that former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and was working with al-Qaida.

A footnote buried in the Senate Intelligence Committee's 500-page report references a Libyan national known as Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi who "reported while in ... custody that Iraq was supporting al-Qaida and providing assistance with chemical and biological weapons."

Some of that intelligence from al-Libi was used by former Secretary of State Colin Powell during a speech to the United Nations (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/feb/05/iraq.usa>) attempting to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq, according to the footnote, despite al-Libi later recanting the claim.

That speech by Powell, delivered on Feb. 5, 2003, was a pivotal part of the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq, wherein the secretary discussed Iraq's "deadly weapons program" and the country's "involvement in terrorism."

No weapons of mass destruction were ever discovered in Iraq, nor was Hussein found to have deep, crucial ties (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2014/07/17/the-cheneys-claims-of-a-deep-longstanding-far-reaching-relationship-between-al-qaeda-and-saddam/>) to al-Qaida. It is unclear how significant al-Libi's testimony was to the Bush administration's insistence that Hussein possessed them.

Part of the reason for that lack of clarity is that the partially redacted footnote instructs readers to refer to a still-classified portion of the torture report for more information. Only the executive summary of the full 6,000-page report was released publicly Tuesday, and it is unlikely that other portions of the report will be declassified--though some lawyers representing Guantanamo Bay detainees have vowed to push for the full release.

Senate Intelligence Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein and Democratic members of her committee have spent several months this year fighting with the administration over its heavy use of redactions in the report.

Specific details of the interrogation al-Libi was subjected to do not appear in the report, but other detainees are described as undergoing waterboarding, extreme sleep deprivation, physical abuse, and sexual intimidation. Among the report's central findings is that detainees, including 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, provided interrogators with false information in order to end the brutality they endured.

Al-Libi died from an apparent suicide in 2009, according to the government, though human-rights organizations have expressed doubt about the cause of his death.

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