

THE CONSTITUTION PROJECT



Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - April 3, 2014

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TCP Calls Vote to Declassify Part of Senate Report on CIA Torture Program a "Critical Step"

Co-chair of independent, bipartisan study group says public must be allowed to "decide for itself" about post-9/11 treatment of suspected terrorists

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Ambassador James R. Jones, co-chair of The Constitution Project's Task Force on Detainee Treatment, offered the following comment in response to today's vote by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence to send portions of its still-secret report on the CIA Rendition, Detention and Interrogation (RDI) Program to the executive branch for declassification:

"We applaud the members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and in particular the committee's chair, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), for today's courageous vote. We are especially encouraged that the vote to declassify portions of the report enjoyed strong bipartisan support. As our Task Force on Detainee Treatment demonstrated, honesty about how our country responded to the worst terrorist attack in its history, and the importance of learning from terrible mistakes, are not partisan issues.

"Consistent with his recent promise, we urge President Obama to ensure that declassification is completed quickly and maximizes transparency. The White House should lead that process.

"The public deserves to know the full scope and scale of what was done in its name after 9/11 and to decide for itself whether claims about torture's necessity stand up in light of the actual facts. Making public the committee report's executive summary, findings and conclusions is a critical step in that process. The balance of the committee's report should follow.

"The committee's report will shed important additional light on a pitch-dark chapter in our history. But only armed with a comprehensive understanding of the past can we move forward confident in our ability to cope with any future crisis consistent with our laws and values."

Following today's bipartisan vote, sections of the committee's report will be sent to the Obama administration for declassification, and then presumably the declassified material will be made available to the public. President Obama has [committed](#) to declassifying the report "as soon as it is

completed." Citing the CIA's inherent conflict of interest, an alliance of civil liberties and human rights groups, including The Constitution Project, sent a [letter](#) to the president last week saying that it is "imperative" that White House staff, not the CIA, take the lead in declassifying the Senate report.

The Constitution Project's Task Force on Detainee Treatment -- an 11-member [bipartisan panel](#) co-chaired by Jones, a former Democratic Congressman from Oklahoma who served as Ambassador to Mexico under President Bill Clinton, and former Congressman Asa Hutchinson (R-Ark.), who served as an undersecretary of the Department of Homeland Security under President George W. Bush -- spent two years examining the treatment of suspected terrorists under the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations. The Task Force released its report in April, 2013.

Consistent with [recent descriptions](#) of the intelligence committee study, the Task Force found that post-9/11 detainee abuse was more brutal and widespread than commonly understood. It also [similarly found](#) that certain claims about torture's efficacy -- on which the Justice Department relied in authorizing "enhanced interrogation" -- were false.

The Task Force [unanimously concluded](#) that "[t]he high level of secrecy surrounding the rendition and torture of detainees since September 11 cannot continue to be justified on the basis of national security." Members called explicitly, but not only, for declassification and release of the full Senate Intelligence Committee report, with redactions limited to those necessary for protecting specific individuals and honoring specific diplomatic agreements. A coalition of open government groups, including The Constitution Project, has since [urged](#) the president to declassify the entire RDI program.

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[About The Constitution Project](#)

Created out of the belief that we must cast aside the labels that divide us in order to keep our democracy strong, The Constitution Project (TCP) brings together policy experts and legal practitioners from across the political spectrum to foster consensus-based solutions to the most difficult constitutional challenges of our time. TCP seeks to reform the nation's broken criminal justice system and to strengthen the rule of law through scholarship, advocacy, policy reform and public education initiatives. Established in 1997, TCP is based in Washington, D.C.