

Blame It On Communists

Li Onesto

A July 2 New York Times article titled, "China Inspired Interrogations at Guanta-namo," reported that in December 2002 military trainers at Guantanamo Bay based an entire interrogation class on a chart showing the effects of "coercive management techniques." These techniques included "sleep deprivation," "prolonged constraint," and "exposure." According to the article, the "chart was copied from a 1957 Air Force study of Chinese Communist techniques used during the Korean War to obtain confessions, many of them false, from American prisoners."

The 1957 article says these alleged methods are the same ones that "inquisitors had employed for centuries" and were nothing that "was not common practice to police and intelligence interrogators of other times and nations." But then it goes on to say that the chart is evidence that "Communist interrogation methods" are the basis for the kind of torture currently being done today by the US military and the CIA.

Albert D Biderman, a sociologist working for the American Air Force, wrote an article entitled, "Communist Attempts to Elicit False Confessions from Air Force Prisoners of War." Biderman interviewed US soldiers who had been captured in the Korean War. Some of these GIs had been filmed by their captors, confessing to the use of germ warfare and other atrocities by the US.

Did the US carry out atrocities in the Korean War?

Yes. In fact, recently declassified US documents and photographs reveal that in US Army officers were aware of and in some instances supervised mass executions of as many as 200,000 people. US soldiers carried out indiscriminate massacres of civilians, including many women and children. The US dropped bombs, including napalm, on villages. And there is credible evidence that the US was experimenting with germ warfare in limited covert actions during the Korean War. (See *The United States and Biological Warfare: Secrets from the Early Cold War and Korea* by Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, Indiana University Press, 1999.)

But when captured US soldiers confessed to such crimes, the question asked by the US government wasn't : was this actually true or not. These "confessions" were just declared "false" and then the question became: how were these American prisoners "brainwashed" to say such things? And on the basis of this, the US military set out to find a way to "inoculate" US soldiers against making such "false confessions."

There is a question of what the actual truth is about how North Korean soldiers and Chinese communists treated POWs during the Korean War. The US Congress carried out extensive hearings, led by the infamous anti-communist Senator Joe McCarthy, on the treatment of US Korean War POWs, where soldiers said they were badly treated-something which should be further investigated. And Biderman argues that there is evidence that some Air Force POWs (who were suspected of carrying out germ warfare experiments) were subjected to things like being forced to stand for long periods of time and put in isolated confinement. But Biderman's article and the Congressional hearings

do not argue (or provide any evidence) that anything like electroshock, water torture, or sensory deprivation was used.

But the argument by the *New York Times* that "China Inspired Interrogations at Guantanamo"—that is, that there is a direct relationship between methods used by Chinese communists during the Korean War and things like electroshock and waterboarding being used at Guantanamo—relies on assumptions and speculation. No concrete facts and proof are offered by the *New York Times* article. This article was picked up and spread all over the world. Now, suddenly, there's a new "explanation" for the horrendous torture the US has used at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib : This can be blamed on the communists!

In point of fact, there is a whole history of how electroshock and sensory deprivation came to be used by the United States as a form of torture. And this has nothing to do with so-called "communist interrogation methods."

The *New York Times* got one thing right when it said that the US impetus for developing torture techniques came out of a Cold War fear of communism. A follow up *New York Times* article (July 6) discusses how after the Korean War, the CIA set out to find "mind-control techniques to grill suspected double agents."

The CIA set up secret prisons in US-occupied Germany and Japan and, according to the article: "In these cells, the agency conducted experiments in drug-induced brainwashing and other 'special techniques' for interrogations. These continued inside and outside the United States, sometimes on unsuspecting human guinea pigs, long after the Korean War ended in 1953."

In other words : *Cruel and inhuman* torture techniques—such as shock treatment, sensory deprivation, and the use of hallucinogenic drugs—were developed and refined by carrying out cruel and inhuman experiments. And this was directly conceived of, funded by, and utilized by the CIA and the US military.

Project MK-ULTRA was the code name for a covert CIA program that began in the early 1950s and continued at least through the late 1960s. The aim of this project was to research "mind-control" and the use of drugs, i.e. "chemical interrogation," and come up with a way to manipulate and alter people's brains in order to get information.

MK-ULTRA became public in 1975 through an investigation by a US congressional committee. Efforts to fully expose this covert program were hampered by the fact that CIA Director Richard Helms had ordered all MK-ULTRA files destroyed in 1973. But it is clear that this program subjected hundreds of people to CIA-funded experiments carried out at universities, prisons, mental hospitals, and drug rehabilitation centers.

According to a 1994 article, "The Cold War Experiments," in *US News and World Report* : "From the end of World War II well into the 1970s, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Defense Department, the military services, the CIA and other agencies used prisoners, drug addicts, mental patients, college students, soldiers, even bar patrons, in a vast range of government-run experiments to test the effects of everything from radiation, LSD and nerve gas to intense electric shocks and prolonged 'sensory deprivation.' Some of the human guinea pigs knew what they were getting into; many others did not even know they were being experimented on."

Air Force officer Lloyd Gamble volunteered in 1957 to take part in a test at the Army Chemical Warfare Laboratories in Edgewood, Maryland. He said he was told he would be testing gas masks and protective gear. Later Gamble suffered blackouts, deep depression, acute anxiety, and violent behavior. In 1960 he tried to kill himself. Eighteen years after the experiment, in 1975, Gamble learned that he and a thousand other soldiers had been given LSD.

In other experiments the US Army exposed as many as 3,000 soldiers to BZ, a powerful hallucinogen being developed as a chemical weapon. BZ attacks the nervous system and causes dizziness, vomiting, and immobility. Thousands of other human guinea pigs, who were part of the Army's Medical Volunteer Program, were tested with nerve gas and various vaccines and antidotes.

Over a decade, MK-ULTRA spent \$25 million on research, and 80 institutions were involved in the program, including 44 universities and 12 hospitals.

In the 1950s, Canadian psychiatrist Dr Ewen Cameron developed a method to treat psychotics using what he called "depatterning" and "psychic driving." Cameron took psychiatric patients and gave them huge doses of electroshock (ECT). He gave them all kinds of experimental drugs, including hallucinogens like LSD and PCP. And he kept them in isolation for weeks.

The fact that the CIA funded all this was revealed in the late 1970s through a Freedom of Information request that led to hearings in the US Senate. And details of the CIA-backed crimes of Ewen Cameron have been widely documented, including in the recent book *The Shock Doctrine* by Naomi Klein (Metropolitan Books, 2007).

Cameron's patients had come to him for things like postpartum depression and anxiety. Some just wanted help with a troubled marriage. But then, without their knowledge and without their permission, they became test subjects in experiments aimed at giving the CIA ways to control the human mind.

Cameron was a US citizen who was highly regarded in his profession. He had been president of the American Psychiatric Association, president of the Canadian Psychiatric Association, and president of the World Psychiatric Association. In 1945 he had testified at the war crimes trials in Nuremburg regarding the sanity of Adolph Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess.

In the midst of Cold War hysteria, the CIA developed a covert program to research "special interrogation techniques." A declassified CIA memo revealed that this program "examined and investigated numerous unusual techniques of interrogation, including psychological harassment and such matters as "total isolation," as well as "the use of drugs and chemicals." (CIA, "Memorandum for the Record, Subject: Project ARTICHOKE," January 31, 1975, available at: www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv.)

It was in this context that the CIA became interested in Cameron's theories and experiments. And Cameron, who was a staunch anti-communist, was happy to sacrifice his patients to the CIA's Cold War efforts.

The theory behind Cameron's experiments was not only criminally inhuman but also highly unscientific. The basic idea was that administering repeated electric shocks to the human brain would erase a "faulty" mind. And Cameron would then supposedly be able to rebuild a new personality on a "clean slate."

Cameron kept increasing the dosages of electroshock to his patients. This got to the point where some were getting shocks twice a day for 30 days-which came to 360 individual shocks to each patient.

Take the case of Gail Kastner, who was one of Dr Cameron's "patients." No less than 63 times, she had 150 to 200 volts of electricity sent into the frontal lobes of her brain. Each time, this sent her body into violent convulsions. As a result, she suffered fractures, sprains, bloody lips, and broken teeth.

Victims of Cameron experienced amnesia and memory loss. Many went into an infantile state-sucking their thumbs and curling up in a fetal position. They needed to be spoon-fed and cried for their mothers. Some forgot how to walk and talk. Some became incontinent. Some suffered permanent brain damage.

After supposedly "depatterning" people's minds, Cameron then subjected his patients to tape-recorded messages. The totally unscientific premise here was that if patients "absorbed" what they heard over and over again, they would start acting according to the "message." The tapes said things like: "You are a good mother and wife and people enjoy your company."

With CIA money Cameron built an isolation chamber. This soundproof room was used to subject patients to extreme sensory deprivation. The room was dark. While noise was piped in. Dark goggles were put over people's eyes. Their ears were plugged up. And cardboard tubing was put around their hands and arms to restrict any sense of touch. Cameron sometimes kept people like this for weeks. In one case he kept someone in this isolation chamber for 35 days.

Dr Ewen Cameron's horrible crimes were funded by the CIA until 1961. □□□
[Source : Revolution, Chicago]