

Declassified manual details the methods used in Honduras Agency denials refuted

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WASHINGTON -- A newly declassified CIA training manual details torture methods used against suspected subversives in Central America during the 1980s, refuting claims by the agency that no such methods were taught there.

"Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual -- 1983" was released Friday in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed by The Sun on May 26, 1994.

The CIA also declassified a Vietnam-era training manual called "KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation -- July 1963," which also taught torture and is believed by intelligence sources to have been a basis for the 1983 manual.

Torture methods taught in the 1983 manual include stripping suspects naked and keeping them blindfolded. Interrogation rooms should be windowless, dark and soundproof, with no toilet.

"The `questioning' room is the battlefield upon which the `questioner' and the subject meet," the 1983 manual states. "However, the `questioner' has the advantage in that he has total control over the subject and his environment."

The 1983 manual was altered between 1984 and early 1985 to discourage torture after a furor was raised in Congress and the press about CIA training techniques being used in Central America.

Those alterations and new instructions appear in the documents obtained by The Sun, support the conclusion that methods taught in the earlier version were illegal.

A cover sheet placed in the manual in March 1985 cautions: "The use of force, mental torture, threats, insults or exposure to inhumane treatment of any kind as an aid to interrogation is prohibited by law, both international and domestic; it is neither authorized nor condoned."

The Sun's 1994 request for the manuals was made in connection with the newspaper's investigation of kidnapping, torture and murder committed by a CIA-trained Honduran military unit during the 1980s. The CIA turned over the documents -- with passages deleted -- only after The Sun threatened to sue the agency to obtain the documents.

Human rights abuses by the Honduran unit known as Battalion 316 were most intense in the early 1980s at the height of the Reagan administration's war against communism in Central America. They were documented by The Sun in a four-part series published from June 11 to 18, 1995.

UNMISTAKABLE SIMILARITIES

The methods taught in the 1983 manual and those used by Battalion 316 in the early 1980s show unmistakable similarities.

The manual advises an interrogator to "manipulate the subject's environment, to create unpleasant or intolerable situations."

In The Sun's series, Florencio Caballero, a former member of Battalion 316, said CIA instructors taught him to discover what his prisoners loved and what they hated.

"If a person did not like cockroaches, then that person might be more cooperative if there were cockroaches running around the room," Caballero said.

In 1983, Caballero attended a CIA "human resources exploitation or interrogation course," according to declassified testimony by Richard Stolz, then-deputy director for operations, before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in June 1988.

The "Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual -- 1983" suggests that the interrogator show the prisoner letters from home to convey the impression that the prisoner's relatives are suffering or in danger.

In The Sun's series, Jose Barrera, a former member of Battalion 316 who said he was taught interrogation methods by U.S. instructors in 1983, recalled using the technique:

"The first thing we would say is that we know your mother, your younger brother. And better you cooperate, because if you don't, we're going to bring them in and rape them and torture them and kill them," Barrera said.

The manual suggests that prisoners be deprived of food and sleep, and made to maintain rigid positions, such as standing at attention for long periods.

Ines Consuelo Murillo, who spent 78 days in Battalion 316's secret jails in 1983, told The Sun that she was given no food or water for days, and that to keep her from sleeping, one of her captors entered her room every 10 minutes and poured water over her head.

Mark Mansfield, a CIA spokesman, declined to comment on the manuals. However, asked about agency policy on the use of force and torture, he referred to Stolz's 1988 testimony before the Senate intelligence committee.

In testimony declassified at The Sun's request, Stolz confirmed that the CIA trained Hondurans.

"The course consisted of three weeks of classroom instruction followed by two weeks of practical exercises, which included the questioning of actual prisoners by the students.

"Physical abuse or other degrading treatment was rejected, not only because it is wrong, but because it has historically proven to be ineffective," he said.

Beyond that reference, Mansfield said only: "There are still aspects of the review process that need to be completed. For that reason, it would not be appropriate to comment."

He was referring to an internal CIA investigation ordered in 1995, after publication of The Sun series on Battalion 316, to determine whether CIA officials acted improperly in Honduras during the 1980s.

The Clinton administration promised more than a year ago that CIA, State Department and Defense Department documents relevant to the time of Battalion 316's abuses would be turned over to Honduran government human rights investigators. To date, no CIA documents have been sent to the Hondurans.

A TRUTH CONFIRMED

The Honduran judge overseeing his country's human rights investigation welcomed the release of the CIA training manuals.

"These manuals confirm a truth we in Honduras have known for a long time: that the United States was involved in encouraging the abuses of the Honduran military," said Judge Roy Medina. "They were trying to stop communism. But the methods they used are not acceptable in civilized societies."

In releasing the training manuals, the CIA declined to say whether either document was used in Honduras. However, a declassified 1989 report prepared for the Senate intelligence committee, obtained earlier by The Sun, says the 1983 manual was developed from notes of a CIA interrogation course in Honduras.

The most graphic part of the 1983 manual is a chapter dealing with "coercive techniques."

The manual discourages physical torture, advising interrogators to use more subtle methods to threaten and frighten the suspect.

"While we do not stress the use of coercive techniques, we do want to make you aware of them and the proper way to use them," the manual's introduction

states. The manual says such methods are justified when subjects have been trained to resist noncoercive measures.

Forms of coercion explained in the interrogation manual include: Inflicting pain or the threat of pain: "The threat to inflict pain may trigger fears more damaging than the immediate sensation of pain. In fact, most people underestimate their capacity to withstand pain."

A later section states: "The pain which is being inflicted upon him from outside himself may actually intensify his will to resist. On the other hand, pain which he feels he is inflicting upon himself is more likely to sap his resistance.

"For example, if he is required to maintain rigid positions such as standing at attention or sitting on a stool for long periods of time, the immediate source of pain is not the 'questioner' but the subject himself."

"After a period of time the subject is likely to exhaust his internal motivational strength."

Inducing dread: The manual says a breakdown in the prisoner's will can be induced by strong fear, but cautions that if this dread is unduly prolonged, "the subject may sink into a defensive apathy from which it is hard to arouse him."

It adds: "It is advisable to have a psychologist available whenever regression is induced."

Getting a confession: Once a confession is obtained, "the pressures are lifted enough so that the subject can provide information as accurately as possible." The subject should be told that "friendly handling will continue as long as he cooperates."

Solitary confinement and other types of sensory deprivation: Depriving a subject of sensory stimulation induces stress and anxiety, the manual says. "The more complete the deprivation, the more rapidly and deeply the subject is affected."

It cites the results of experiments conducted on volunteers who allowed themselves to be suspended in water while wearing blackout masks. They were allowed to hear only their own breathing and faint sounds from the pipes. "The stress and anxiety become almost unbearable for most subjects," the manual says.

Hypnosis and drugs: The 1983 manual suggests creating "hypnotic situations," using concealed machinery, and offers ways of convincing a subject that he has been drugged. Giving him a placebo "may make him want to believe that he has been drugged and that no one could blame him for telling his story now," the manual says.

Arrest: The most effective way to make an arrest is to use the element of surprise, achieving "the maximum amount of mental discomfort."

"The ideal time at which to make an arrest is in the early hours of the morning. When arrested at this time, most subjects experience intense feelings of shock, insecurity and psychological stress and for the most part have difficulty adjusting to the situation."

Cells: Prisoners' cells should have doors of heavy steel. "The slamming of a heavy door impresses upon the subject that he is cut off from the rest of the world."

The manual says "the idea is to prevent the subject from relaxing and recovering from shock."

The 1983 manual suggests that prisoners be blindfolded, stripped and given a thorough medical examination, "including all body cavities."

SUBSTANTIAL REVISIONS

Between 1984 and 1985, after congressional committees began questioning training techniques being used by the CIA in Latin America, "Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual -- 1983" underwent substantial revision.

Passages were crossed out and written over by hand to warn that the methods they described were forbidden. However, in the copy obtained by The Sun, the original wording remained clearly visible beneath the handwritten changes.

Among the changes was this sentence in the section on coercion: "The use of most coercive techniques is improper and violates policy."

In another, the editor crossed out descriptions of solitary confinement experiments and wrote: "To use prolonged solitary confinement for the purpose of extracting information in questioning violates policy."

A third notation says that inducing unbearable stress "is a form of torture. Its use constitutes a serious impropriety and violates policy." And in place of a sentence that says "coercive techniques always require prior [headquarters] approval," an editor has written that they "constitute an impropriety and violate policy."

To an instruction that "heat, air and light" in an interrogation cell should be externally controlled is added "but not to the point of torture."

DISTURBING QUESTIONS

The 1983 interrogation manual was discussed at a closed hearing of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in June 1988. Then-Sen. William S. Cohen

said that the interrogation manual raised disturbing questions, even with the revisions. Cohen is now the secretary of defense.

"No. 1, I am not sure why, in 1983, it became necessary to have such a manual," Cohen said, according to a transcript declassified at The Sun's request. "But, No. 2, upon its discovery, why we only sought to revise it in a fashion which says, 'These are some of the techniques we think are abhorrent. We just want you to be aware of them so you'll avoid them.'

"There's a lot in this that troubles me in terms of whether you are sending subliminal signals that say, 'This is improper, but, by the way, you ought to be aware of it.' "

KUBARK MANUAL

A second document obtained by The Sun, the 1963 KUBARK manual, shows that, at least during the 1960s, agents were free to use coercion during interrogation, provided they obtained approval in advance.

It offers a list of interrogation techniques, including threats, fear, "debility, pain, heightened suggestibility and hypnosis, narcosis [use of drugs] and induced regression."

Like the 1983 manual, the KUBARK manual describes the effectiveness of arresting suspects early in the morning, keeping prisoners blindfolded and taking away their clothes.

"Usually his own clothes are taken away," the manual explains, "because familiar clothing reinforces identity and thus the capacity for resistance."

The KUBARK manual also cautions against making empty threats, and advises interrogators against directly inflicting pain.

It contains one direct and one oblique reference to electrical shocks.

The introduction warns that approval from headquarters is required if the interrogation is to include bodily harm or "if medical, chemical or electrical methods or materials are to be used to induce acquiescence."

A passage on preparing for an interrogation contains this advice: "If a new safehouse is to be used as the interrogation site, it should be studied carefully to be sure that the total environment can be manipulated as desired. For example, the electric current should be known in advance, so that transformers or other modifying devices will be on hand if needed."

An intelligence source told The Sun: "The CIA has acknowledged privately and informally in the past that this referred to the application of electric shocks to interrogation suspects."

While it remains unclear whether the KUBARK manual was used in Central America, the 1963 manual and the 1983 manual are similar in organization and descriptions of certain interrogation techniques and purposes.

The KUBARK manual is mentioned in a 1989 memorandum prepared by the staff of the Senate intelligence committee on the CIA's role in Honduras, and some members of the intelligence community during that period believe it was used in training the Hondurans. One said that some of the lessons from the manual were recorded almost verbatim in notes by CIA agents who sat in on the classes.

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