
A Word on Reading This Report

For those who desire a quick read, the essence of the report can be gleaned by reading the Statement of the Task Force (p. 1) and the Findings and Recommendations (p. 9). Two of the most important findings, those that concern the questions as to whether torture occurred and whether senior U.S. leaders bear some responsibility, are accompanied by thorough memos (provided as appendices at the end of the report) that detail the foundations for the Task Force's deliberations and conclusions on those two issues.

Each of the chapters on subjects such as Guantánamo, the Obama administration, the role of the medical community, etc., is preceded by a brief summary and commentary in italics. These chapters combine previously reported material with new information gathered by the Task Force and its staff. One may, for example, read the italicized introduction to the chapter on Guantánamo to get a quick sense of the rest of the chapter.

In addition, this report contains a handful of sketches of individuals whose stories have not fully been told before. The Task Force believes the accounts of these people provide some special understanding of the history and consequences of the U.S. interrogation and detention program since September 11, 2001.

The sketches are of Albert Shimkus (the first commander of the detainee hospital at Guantánamo), Christophe Girod (an early representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross at Guantánamo), and three Libyans who helped lead the insurgency in their country against Colonel Muammar el-Gaddafi. One Libyan, Abdel Hakim Belhadj, had earlier been rendered by U.S. forces to el-Gaddafi's custody and apparently tortured there. Belhadj's story is told along with those of other Libyans who suffered the same fate. In one of its most important findings, the Task Force concluded that the extraordinary rendition program — which has inherent problems with human rights and international legal standards — was extended, and thus abused, to deal with people like the Libyans, who had nothing to do with Al Qaeda or the September 11 attacks. The ramifications of these transfers with no apparent connection to September 11 are outlined in Chapter 8, discussing the (mostly unintended) consequences of U.S. policy.

There are several features that are not included in the printed version but are available at www.detaineetaskforce.org, including transcripts of many of the interviews conducted by Task Force staff. In addition, the detainee task force website has a master timeline of important events.