



Everardo and the CIA's Long-Term Torture Practices

Jennifer Harbury

Jennifer Harbury's essay in this volume begins and ends with the images of torture by US forces in Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq, witnessing the similarity of torture techniques revealed in those images to techniques used by the United States in its support of counter-insurgency efforts across Latin America in the latter half of the twentieth century. Combining her own testimonial to the torture and disappearance of her husband in Guatemala with testimonials from other survivors of torture in Latin America, Harbury makes the case that the United States has been a participant in torture and disappearance for decades, and that the use of torture in Abu Ghraib was no aberration by a "few bad apples," but rather central to US policy and strategy in its "war on terror." Author of three books on the subject of torture in the Americas, most recently Torture, Truth, and the American Way: The History and Consequences of US Involvement in Torture (2005), which tracks American involvement in torture in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, Harbury is one of the strongest voices bearing witness in the public sphere to US complicity with torture and its devastating aftermaths.

J. Harbury (✉)
Anonymous, USA

After graduating from Harvard Law School in the early 1980s, Harbury went to work in a legal aid bureau on the Texas–Mexico border, where she supported Guatemalans fleeing government violence and repression at home, only to see them turned away by US immigration authorities. This work led her to visit Guatemala in order to witness the situation for herself, whereupon she met her future husband, Everardo, a commander in the Mayan resistance against the brutal Guatemalan military government. In the following essay, Harbury describes witnessing first hand the role of the US military and diplomatic corps in supporting the Guatemalan military government, even when it was US citizens who were killed by its death squad. She then chronicles Everardo’s disappearance, her efforts to locate him, and the cover-up of his whereabouts by Guatemalan and US officials. Harbury’s voice is both the analytical voice of the advocate and legal scholar who understands the devastating impact of torture upon citizens and, indeed, upon democracy itself, as well as the testimonial voice of a survivor of disappearance (Patricio Rice’s essay in this volume examines the contributions of survivors in formulating and advocating for the United Nations Convention against Enforced Disappearance). Understanding the collective nature of the use of torture and disappearance as repressive mechanisms across Central and South America, Harbury reports testimonials from a range of torture survivors so as to reveal patterns of torture methods and repressive strategies across time and space, in order to counter the denial and repression of these practices by government officials at home and abroad. What follows is both testimony to and argument against the use of torture—anywhere, at any time, by any government.

* * *

As the horrifying images of the prisoners flashed across television screens around the world, most Americans reacted with shock and outrage. President Bush himself rushed to assure us that the young soldiers in the photographs were just a “few bad apples” and “Un-American,” and that the United States itself would never engage in torture. This we heard again and again, while the young military policemen and -women were quickly court-martialed and imprisoned.

Sadly, as the public outcry grew, there were some of us who felt only a chilling sense of déjà vu. We are members of a small group of torture survivors from all parts of the globe. The disturbing images came as no surprise to us. We ourselves had endured or witnessed precisely the same tortures. Worse yet, US intelligence agents had been present in our cells,

teaching those very “interrogation techniques.” The low-ranking soldiers at Abu Ghraib were hardly a few bad apples. They were simply carrying out orders and using standard—albeit criminal—methods developed and used by US intelligence networks for many decades. The soldiers were punished, while the intellectual authors who gave the orders remain free of any consequences. If we allow this grave injustice, then what remains of our prized democracy and system of justice?

GUATEMALA, A LONG-STANDING EXAMPLE

The realities of US involvement in torture were brought home to me in a very personal way in Guatemala. I spent years monitoring the government rights violations there during the 1980s, and like everyone else was horrified by what I witnessed. Friends disappeared one by one—from peasant leaders to judges, priests, physicians, and social workers. Most were never seen again, while others were found dead and mutilated, their bodies sprawled in the streets as a public warning. One young woman searching for her missing husband, a university student, helped to form the Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo, only to be raped, tortured, and murdered herself along with her nineteen-year-old brother and her two-year-old son. All three were found with broken necks. Her body bore cigarette burns, bite marks, and other telling injuries. The baby’s fingernails were missing. What did the United States have to do with all of this? As later reported in the United Nations’ (UN) Truth Commission, far too much.¹

The troubles began, of course, with the 1954 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) coup against the democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz. The reform-oriented era known as “The Ten Years of Spring” came to an abrupt and bloody end. The military ruled with an iron fist for the next many decades, carrying out a campaign of counter-insurgency that earned it the title of worst human rights violator in the western hemisphere. As later determined by the Truth Commission, the Army engaged in genocide against its Mayan citizens. Some 660 villages were massacred, and 200,000 people were either tortured and executed without trial, or “disappeared” forever. The Army was held responsible for 93% of the war crimes, with 4% unknown and only 3% the acts of the largely Mayan resistance forces, or the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG).

¹ Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico de Guatemala (CEHG), *Guatemala Memoria del Silencio*, 1999.

The Commission harshly criticized the US government for knowingly backing this regime despite the ongoing atrocities.

For those of us on the ground in Guatemala, US involvement was always painfully clear. A standing joke within the human rights community was that “if you want someone turned over to the death squads, just ask for asylum at the US Embassy.” The laughs this drew were always rueful. We were only too familiar with the Embassy’s rush to “explain” every new atrocity as “unclear,” a mere matter of common crime, or perhaps an act of revenge by the guerrillas. Even when American citizens were murdered, Embassy staffers were swift to defend the death squads from accusations by anguished family members. We had seen the obvious gringos riding in jeeps or descending from helicopters, shoulder to shoulder with Army officials. We saw the soldiers rampaging through the streets with their terrifying dogs, “made in the USA” stamps visible on their equipment. We despaired when military aid continued on the grounds that the United States should help “professionalize” the local military.

In the end, I was driven out of Guatemala by the conspicuous men in dark glasses waiting for me every night in my hotel lobby, guns clearly visible under their heavy vests. Back in the United States, I found that I could not put Guatemala behind me while my friends there were still dying. So, I began a book, writing down their life stories and experiences as they had told them to me. I was tired of the silence in the mainstream press, and I was more than tired of the Embassy’s deceptions.

EVERARDO

As the book, *Bridge of Courage*, neared completion, it became important to include the young Mayan women combatants. I found their stories remarkable and wished to interview them as well. In 1990, after some negotiating, I found myself at a combat base high in the volcanoes of southwest Guatemala. It was there that I met my future husband, Everardo, who was the commander of the region and one of the founding members of the Organización Revolucionaria del Pueblo Armado (ORPA). A Mayan peasant himself, he had starved as a child laborer, learning to read and write when he arrived in the mountains at the age of eighteen. For the next seventeen years he had remained in combat, rising swiftly to the ranks to become a Comandante, and eluding the military time and time again. We met again in Mexico City a year later, moved in together, and married in late 1991. He returned to the front in January 1992, then vanished into

thin air a few months later, during a brief skirmish on March 12. He was the only person missing, and his despairing *compañeros* could find no trace of him.

I was, of course, devastated by the news. The Guatemalan Army was claiming that Everardo had died in combat and that he was buried in a grave in the small town of Retalhuleu. If this was true, then he had died a soldier's death, and I thought I could bear it. If not true, then he was being tortured in a secret cell. This I could not carry. Having visited the morgues only too often to reclaim the dead, I knew what it meant, and could not keep the images out of my head. The UN now deems "disappearances" to be a form of psychological torture of the surviving family members. This is the truth.

The Guatemalan government had provided us with a description of the body found at the site of the skirmish, and it matched Everardo feature by feature. Nonetheless, when I tried to exhume the body in Retalhuleu, I was driven out of the cemetery by the Attorney General himself, who arrived in a military plane, and some twenty-five police armed with rifles. It was then that we all knew that something was terribly wrong.

For months, ORPA leadership searched for clues, quietly speaking with witnesses and tracking down leads. Villagers had seen a body carried out in a burlap bag, but were unsure as to whether the person was dead or alive. The search continued, but few of us believed that Everardo could still be alive. Months had passed. No one survived torture for long.

At the end of 1992, a young man named Santiago Cabrera Lopez escaped from a military base and fled into Mexico to find us. He was from Everardo's combat team and had been captured the year before, together with a young *compañera* named Karina. Both had been severely tortured. Santiago had been held in a pit under an officer's desk, beaten with cement blocks until he hemorrhaged, beaten across the feet until his toenails fell out, given electrical shocks to the testicles, and then chained to a bed without a blanket for months. We were amazed to find him alive. In thirty-five years of war, the Army had never presented a single living prisoner of war to any authority or court of law. Santiago explained that the Army had a new program, from Argentina, which they were using on selected prisoners. Most were indeed tortured and swiftly killed, as before. But some were subjected to long-term torture, with the goal of breaking the prisoner psychologically to obtain his or her information. Physicians were on hand to prevent accidental deaths. The goal was to break the prisoners, not to kill them.

Santiago survived by pretending to be broken, identifying the dead, and deciphering old radio codes he knew were no longer in use. He saluted with respect and waited for his chance. The other prisoners had been subdued with threats that their families would be killed if they tried to escape. Santiago's family, however, had already fled the country. He had nothing to lose, and once he sensed that the officers trusted him, he ran for his life across the border into Mexico. A young Mayan peasant with virtually no education had just outwitted the entire intelligence division.

Santiago knew we were looking for Everardo, his own commanding officer and long-time friend, and he found his way through the underground until he made contact. To his horror, he had watched Everardo being dragged into the Santa Ana Berlin military base on March 12, 1992. He had heard the officers laughing about staging the combat death to avoid an international human rights outcry. They wanted to torture Everardo, slowly and for a long time, without interference. Santiago saw Everardo battered repeatedly. On one particularly grim occasion in June, Everardo was chained to a bed frame with an unidentified gas cylinder at his side. Colonel Julio Alpirez was bending over him taking notes. His body was grotesquely swollen, with one arm and leg bandaged as if hemorrhaging, and he was raving. A doctor was nearby to keep him alive. Santiago saw Everardo for the last time a few days later, a uniform covering the bandaged arm and leg. He looked pale and unwell, but he was still alive.

With that knowledge, I rushed to file an emergency complaint with the Inter-American Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS), and paid a visit to a none-too-friendly State Department officer. I also met with the incoming ambassador, Marilyn McAfee, who expressed great concern and promised to help. She was charming, but I expected the worst. I also visited Capitol Hill, and to my surprise received prompt support from both Democrats and Republicans.

Still, I knew that in the end I was on my own, so I returned to Guatemala and forced the exhumation of the Retalhuleu grave. The Guatemalan government had just suffered an internal upheaval and US aid had been briefly suspended by President Clinton. This came as a bit of a shock to local officials who, as a result, were eager to show that this was a new, improved, and democratic Guatemala. And so I fared somewhat better than the last time around. As I filed the requisite papers in the tiny court house, a courageous official signaled me to read through the files. There was the answer. The report gave incredible detail about the body found at

the combat site, describing even the person's underwear and the tins of food in his pack. A precise description of Everardo was given again. At the line on the form for scars and other identifying features, though, the author had written "none." Yet Everardo, after seventeen years of combat, had scars all over his body, including a very visible one on his upper lip from a tumble over a cliff. Clearly, the official had never seen Everardo at all. The news photographs showed the man standing over a body, surrounded by soldiers. Not wishing to die, he had wisely written down the false information as ordered. The autopsy report in the file was dated the same day, but described a far younger and smaller man, with very different scars. The youth had been strangled, shot, stabbed, and battered to death. His skull was crushed. There was ink on his fingertip from being printed. This was no combat death.

It was the summer of 1993, and I was fearful of yet another cancellation. There was no time to lose, and so I said nothing at all and waited for the exhumation. An Embassy staffer came with us to observe. The grave was hard to find and we spent the afternoon watching while four different locations were opened. The forensic team handed me plastic buckets filled with decomposing human heads, while officials demanded a reason for why I believed it was not Everardo. None had the crushed skull described in the autopsy report, and none had Everardo's dental patterns. All were in civilian clothing.

Finally, we opened the fourth grave, and found a tiny figure in an olive-green uniform. The skull was crushed beyond recognition. This was the body in the autopsy report, but it was not Everardo. Forensic tests showed the young man to have been fifteen years younger than Everardo. The gold caps on a tooth were another clear indication. Everardo had no funds for dental care, let alone a gold "corona." He had no caps. As we learned years later, the youth we found in the grave had been a young soldier named Valentin. He was dragged from the barracks and killed at the riverside as part of the hoax. His friend finally fled the Army, bringing his identification papers and telling us the whole story.

Once again, I returned to the Embassy and met with the Ambassador, who paled and asked that I give her everything in writing. I did so. Once again, she promised to look into the matter immediately and get right back to me with anything she could glean. I did not hold my breath. Instead, I wrote to the growing number of concerned Congresspersons, and met with a delegation of OAS members visiting Guatemala. I even met with the Minister of Defense, General Enriquez, in his luxurious Casa

Crema quarters. He too paled when I cited the evidence, but assured me that they had never captured Everardo, who “must be hiding somewhere.” Enriquez also heavily insinuated that my marital problems were not his concern. I responded that if Everardo were presented alive to the courts of law, I would remain quiet, but that otherwise there would be some uproar. He told me to go ahead and make my uproar, and showed me to the door.

The next morning I was sitting in front of the Polytechnica, the fortress-like military intelligence headquarters notorious for its secret torture cells. I announced a one-week hunger strike and sat for seven days drinking water only. After a shocked public silence, the Guatemalans came forth one by one, bringing flowers and photographs of their own missing loved ones.

The uproar in the press brought still more congressional attention, and the members began to pressure the Embassy. They all received the same form letter, stating that there was no information at all about Everardo, and that there was no independent evidence that any secret prisons existed in Guatemala. Meanwhile, I received protective orders from the OAS, which the Guatemalan military ignored, as well as the support of the UN human rights network, which was also ignored.

Then things began to change, ever so discreetly. For more than six months, I was received by Defense Minister Enriquez, as well as other high-level military officers, for quiet conversations. Enriquez would serve me coffee, then bluster that the Army had never taken Everardo prisoner. “All the same,” he would ask me smoothly, “just what would you do if we could ‘find’ Everardo and present him to the courts as a token of respect?” I answered that I would sign a release of all criminal charges against Colonel Alpirez and publicly congratulate the Guatemalan Army for a historic change in its human rights practices. Enriquez would smile broadly and murmur that I was a most intelligent young woman, then slide the coffee pot in my direction. This went on for months.

I reported all of this to Ambassador McAfee, who became quite agitated and told me that these conversations could not have happened. I also reported the discussions to high-level officials in the State Department in Washington. They dourly promised to continue searching for information, but made it clear that Everardo was no doubt dead and that “all kinds of things happen in Guatemala.”

The quiet tête-à-têtes halted as abruptly in the spring of 1994, and all doors closed to me in Guatemala. I knew time was running out. The Peace Accords were to be finalized soon, and the Army would no longer need

Everardo's information. Nor would they allow him to live and denounce the tortures he had suffered. In October, I simply sat down in front of the National Palace and declared a hunger strike to the death. My decision was made, and I was at peace. Maybe I would die there, maybe I would survive, but I would never acquiesce. The official reaction was immediate, with an enraged General Enriquez shouting at the press, and the Guatemalans, as always, risking their lives to sit with me, bring flowers, water, and always the photographs of their own disappeared loved ones. Speaking with them, I remembered an older friend who rose every morning at 4 a.m. to iron her son's shirts. He had been missing for twelve years. These are wounds which never heal.

I remained on the hunger strike for thirty-two days and nights, sleeping in the square on a blanket. My left eye closed, my upper lip stiffened, I developed a heart murmur, and I was cold and dizzy at all times. Even in the noonday sun I huddled in sweaters and blankets, chilled to the bone. General Enriquez threatened to have me tossed into a mental institution if I became "suicidal," so I learned to bend over and tie my shoelaces whenever I felt faint so that blood would rush to my head. There was a shooting one night and non-stop death threats. Ambassador McAfee expressed her great concern.

Then suddenly, Mike Wallace aired a program on *60 Minutes* about us. In it he revealed that the Embassy had in fact received a CIA bulletin confirming that Everardo had been captured alive. This was news to the many members of Congress who had long been trying to assist us, as well as to the OAS and numerous human rights organizations. Everyone had received the same State Department letter claiming that there was no information. In the ensuing uproar, I was invited to come to the White House to talk things over with the National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake. It seemed the better option at that point. As I left Guatemala, the police killed a number of demonstrators, including a young law student who often sat with me in the square. His name was Alioto.

Back in Washington, nothing happened. I did indeed meet with Mr. Lake, who assured me that the bulletin described by Mike Wallace was the only document there was, and that they had "scraped the bottom of the barrel." I asked that all files be turned over to me at once, as for obvious reasons I could not trust my own government. He made no promises and I filed my Freedom of Information Act request, seeking expedited disclosures. I received nothing.

Given the situation, I went on my third hunger strike, this time in front of the White House. There was no more time. The State Department left me out there for twelve long days. Then Senator Torricelli came forward with extraordinary disclosures. Everardo was dead. He had been killed upon the orders of Colonel Alpirez, who was in fact a CIA paid informant or “asset.” The State Department knew all this, but had withheld the information not only from me but from Congress as well.

Now Congress was truly furious. It was April of 1995. Some three years had been lost in saving a life. Too little and too late, I began to receive US files and hear from new witnesses. I did not like what I heard. Six days after Everardo’s capture, the CIA had informed the State Department that he was a very important prisoner and that his death would be falsified in order to better obtain his information. In short, he was to be secretly detained and tortured. There were several more, early CIA bulletins after this, but they have remained secret to this day, no doubt because they reflect payments to Everardo’s torturers. When I first called the State Department in early 1993, the Embassy in fact sent someone to investigate the matter, and received a report confirming that Everardo had been captured alive and held at a base called Santa Ana Merlin. Yet the State officials continued to insist to me and to everyone else that they had no information. A later bulletin confirms that Everardo and some 350 other secret prisoners are still alive. This means that when I opened the grave and inspected the four human heads in the plastic buckets, Ambassador McAfee already knew that Everardo was alive and suffering torture at the hands of the United States’ own paid informants. She sent a staffer to accompany me, but she never told anyone the truth.

From then on numerous CIA bulletins went to the State Department. They describe Everardo being battered and drugged and held in a full body cast to prevent his escape. They describe the deaths of his many friends, one by one. Some were kept in pits of water so deep they had to hang on to overhead bars to keep from drowning.² After torture sessions the prisoners were thrown dead or alive from helicopters into the sea as a way of destroying “evidence.”

Somewhat sourly, the bulletins note that everything Everardo said during the “interrogation” sessions turned out to be false. Once he even agreed to take the Army to the long-sought URNG radio station, leading them instead into a ferocious ambush. He never told them anything

²The “water pit” is being used now by the United States in the war against terror.

“useful,” and so finally he was either thrown from a helicopter or dismembered. All of the 350 prisoners were believed to be dead also. From what witnesses tell me, Everardo was alive until the summer of 1994. Had the truth been timely told, his life and the lives of the others could have been saved.

It does not end there. Between eight and twelve of Everardo’s torturers were trained at the School of the Americas. Several were on the CIA payroll. Although the United States had earlier cut off military aid to Guatemala, the CIA continued to pay its assets and shield them from any legal or diplomatic consequences. Col. Alpirez himself received \$44,000 shortly after he was seen torturing Everardo with a toxic substance. An unnamed CIA agent took the trouble to deliver the funds to a remote rural area in person. Many people tell me that today Alpirez is living in the United States. As one CIA memo noted, he is the keeper of many secrets. Apparently that includes US secrets as well.

There was a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on the case. We were told that the CIA abuses represented the work of a “few bad apples,” that torture was not to be tolerated, and that it would never happen again. A few agents were ceremoniously fired, but later on they were honored.

Since Everardo’s death I have worked to help abolish torture, especially by the United States. We brought the Guatemalan government to a full international trial in San Jose, Costa Rica, at the Inter-American Court on Human Rights of the OAS, and received a unanimous landmark decision in our favor in 2000. As for the CIA, I filed suit in 1996 and spent more than eleven years litigating the motion to dismiss, a matter usually resolved within months. Things seemed hopeful for a while, but with the widespread use of torture by the US since September 11, 2001, the courts have been dismissing cases left and right. My days fighting the case in the United States are clearly numbered. I will finish the proceedings, then move on to Spain. The doctrine of universal jurisdiction is a very good part of international jurisprudence.

VOICES OF THE SURVIVORS

As the uproar over Everardo’s case died down, I began to hear from other survivors from across Latin America. Few death squad victims ever survived to tell their stories, but now those few began to make contact with me. Fearful of retaliation against themselves or their families, most have asked that their names be kept confidential. But they wished to make one

thing perfectly clear: they too were tortured, and they too had had American intelligence agents assisting and advising the torturers. Worse yet, the techniques used on them match those we have seen in the Abu Ghraib photographs and in other documentation.

Sister Dianna Ortiz: A US citizen and an Ursuline nun [and author of the epilogue of this volume], Sister Dianna had been teaching schoolchildren in rural Guatemala. In 1989 she was abducted, raped, and tortured by government agents. Her tortures included more than 100 cigarette burns on her back alone and an attack by a terrifying dog. Both methods are now used by the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan. An obvious American speaking Spanish with a heavy American accent arrived in her cell and demanded her release. He knew where to find her and he had authority. The torturers responded, “Yes, Boss,” and turned her over. The man drove her away in his jeep, urging her to forgive her captors because they were fighting communism. She leaped from the vehicle and ran for her life. For many years the US Embassy claimed that Sister Dianna was mentally unstable and that no such American could exist. Yet a photograph of a CIA agent present in Guatemala at the time seems to match her description.

Maria Guardado: In 1980, Maria Guardado was abducted in El Salvador and brutally raped, burned, and tortured. Left for dead, she was able to crawl to safety and eventually flee the country. She has told her story again and again. There was an American in the torture cell. She heard his voice and recognized his accent. He was supervising her torture session. As each Salvadoran agent finished with her, whether breaking her bones, strangling, or burning her, he would say, “Who is next? What method will you use to make her talk?” and then finally, “She’s dead, take her away.”

“Daniel”: Daniel was a young man in Guatemala in 1969. He was dragged off the streets by Army death squad agents and severely tortured. He was “waterboarded,” held under water until he lost consciousness, a technique he describes as unbearable. He was also strapped to a metal chair and given excruciating electric shocks. An American was present, speaking with an obvious accent. He was telling the torturers where to place the wires to inflict the most pain. These techniques are now being used by the United States in the “war against terror.”

“Anna”: Anna was a young student in Honduras in 1983 when she was abducted and severely tortured by members of the deadly Battalion 316. Her torture included mock drownings or waterboarding. She was suspended

by her arms in “stress and duress” positions that permanently damaged her arms and shoulders. She was also terrorized by a ferocious dog. All of these methods are used today by the United States in its war against terror. An American called “Mr. Mike” often arrived to speak with the torturers, give advice, and collect information. He was fully aware of Anna’s plight, but never reported her whereabouts to the police or to her desperate family members. One of the torturers later fled the country and confirmed Anna’s report about Mr. Mike, who worked for the US government. A secret CIA report further confirmed that Mr. Mike was a CIA agent.

“*Juan*”: Juan was a young combatant captured by the Guatemalan military in 1988. His torture included waterboarding, a technique that was used by the CIA in the US “war on terror.” According to the Bush administration, this technique does not rise to the level of torture. Juan described it in detail. He began to gag and had severe pain in his head as he swallowed water. He felt that his ear drums would burst. Then he began to vomit in the water and eventually convulsed and lost consciousness. He awoke when his torturers took steps to revive him. This is a slow-motion mock execution, described by Senator McCain as “very exquisite torture,” and used by the United States today in the Middle East. The UN has specifically ruled it torture. A North American was ushered into Juan’s cell and began to interrogate him about Cuba. He noted all of Juan’s injuries, but simply left him to his fate.

Herbert Anaya: Herbert Anaya was a beloved human rights leader in El Salvador. In 1986, he was shopping with his family when government agents dragged him away in broad daylight. He was secretly held in the Policía de Hacienda headquarters. His wife Mirna learned of his location through secret sources and sent her attorney to find him. The lawyer went to the headquarters and demanded entry, only to be told he must wait. To his surprise, an American advisor came to speak with him, and decided that he could see Herbert in a little while. When the lawyer finally was allowed entry, Herbert was seated with a large blanket covering his lap. He was released a few days later, and explained that he had been forced to stand for so long that his feet were too grotesquely swollen to even fit into his shoes. Not wanting the lawyer to see this, they had covered him with a blanket. Anaya was shot dead at his home a year later, while he was placing his children in the car to take them to school. The technique of forced, long-term standing is excruciating, because the lymph builds up in the limbs and terrible swelling results. It is one of the “stress and duress” methods used now by the United States on detainees.

There are many other cases, which I have set forth in detail in my book, *Truth, Torture and the American Way* (Beacon Books, 2005). Together they paint a grim portrait of the longtime realities of US torture practice. The young soldiers at Abu Ghraib did not come up with those horrific techniques by themselves, nor were they just a “few bad apples.” Indeed, the now- notorious photograph of the hooded man on the box shows a technique well known to intelligence experts as the “Vietnam Position.”

The young soldiers were simply following orders. They were using methods that the CIA had developed and used for decades, and had taught in torture cells across Latin America. At the bottom of one list of permissible torture techniques appears the signature of Donald Rumsfeld himself, and both President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney are deeply implicated.

Once evidence began to emerge that the United States was using these methods routinely, the Bush administration hurried to claim that such techniques were somehow not quite torture. I leave that to the reader to decide. The law, of course, defines torture as any act that inflicts severe pain. Psychological torture includes any mock execution or threat of serious harm to the prisoner or his or her loved ones. Both are felonies under US criminal law and both are serious violations of international law, including the Geneva Conventions and the Convention against Torture.

Does any of this make the United States more secure? Surely not. While the Iraqi people once threw flowers to its troops, now they throw bombs. Studies show that humiliation, repression, and torture create conditions that inevitably spawn suicide bombers and other acts of terror. This is a matter of common sense. If a foreign army invaded the United States and carried out a broad campaign of “disappearances,” torture, and sexual humiliation, there is no doubt as to what the US reaction would be. Never have Americans been more hated or less safe.

What have we done? Perhaps more crucially, what are we going to do about it?