

EIRFeature

Behind the Torture Are the ‘Beast-Men’ Cheney and Rumsfeld

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), coming out of a closed-door Congressional screening of the Iraq torture photographs from Abu Ghraib prison, on May 12, summed up the reactions of a majority of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle: “It felt like you were descending into one of the rings of hell; and sadly, it was our own creation.”

Sen. Durbin’s words echoed the LaRouche in 2004 mass-circulation campaign pamphlets, *Children of Satan I and II*, which exposed the outright fascist, and willfully bestial ideology and policies of Vice President Dick Cheney, and his fellow Straussian neo-conservatives in the Department of Defense civilian bureaucracy and other power centers in Washington. It is Cheney’s neo-con apparatus that bears top-down responsibility for the inhuman torture that took place at Abu Ghraib.

In a May 10 campaign statement, “The Mark of the Beast,” Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche emphasized that the actions by the accused prison guards and interrogators in Baghdad were not simply of their own doing, but were the consequence of a geometry of policy that permeated, top-down, every major action by the Bush-Cheney administration, particularly the entirety of the Iraq war policy.

The pamphlet *Children of Satan II—The Beast-Men*, warned readers about the murderous character of Cheney, in particular: “Dick Cheney is not a copy of Adolf Hitler, but he comes directly out of the same background as Mussolini, Hitler, Franco, and their like, from the 1922-45 pages of modern history. He belongs to the same psychopathological stereotype which history traces back to the ancient Phrygian Dionysus from whom the models of the Spanish Grand Inquisitor and the French Jacobin Terror are traced by the leading intellectual founder of all modern fascist movements—the chief intellect of the modern fascist tradition, Joseph de Maistre. The Cheney-Strauss-Nazi connections to Maistre are clear, and crucial for understanding the Nazi-like global menace, which Cheney, as a sitting U.S. Vice President, typifies for the world today.”

Joseph de Maistre, a leading participant in the Jacobin Terror and the later tyranny of the prototypical beast-man Napoleon Bonaparte, famously wrote about



According to the U.S. Army, one Iraqi prisoner was told to stand on a box with his head covered, wires attached to his hands. (Photo: CBS)

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This CBS-TV photo which triggered the scandal, showed just one of a list of perhaps 50 interrogation techniques, which had been cleared at the top of the Pentagon. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney told the world the Geneva Conventions didn't apply.

the vital role of the executioner in maintaining social order—through bestialization and terror. “All grandeur, all power, all subordination to authority rests on the executioner; he is the horror and the bond of human association. Remove this incomprehensible agent from the world, and at that very moment, order gives way to chaos, thrones topple, and society disappears.”

Did not these words of Maistre mirror Dick Cheney’s now infamous pronouncements about the danger to all civilization in allowing Saddam Hussein to successfully pursue his purported quest for the nuclear bomb—a quest that proved to be pure fiction? Does the “Cheney Doctrine” of preventive nuclear war against potential *future* adversaries rise to the standard of de Maistre’s executioner?

When *Children of Satan II* was first circulated in January, many in official Washington called this characterization—of Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, et al., as Maistre-like “Beast-Men”—“over the top,” “exaggerated,” and “propagandistic.” Then the photographs emerged from inside Abu Ghraib, and the reality of the Cheney-led descent into hell became sensuously clear.

From the Top of the Chain of Command

The full story of Abu Ghraib is yet to be told. But a week of Congressional hearings has already confirmed that the torture techniques were fully known and sanctioned from the top.

In August 2003, with the U.S. occupation force in Iraq

facing a growing asymmetrical warfare insurgency, and with the evidence out that Saddam Hussein did not possess the arsenals of “weapons of mass destruction” that Cheney cited as the reason for “preventive” war, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld dispatched Gen. Geoffrey Miller to Baghdad, to assess and modify the interrogation techniques being used on key Iraqi prisoners.

General Miller was the commander of the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he was already employing techniques specifically banned by the Geneva Convention covering treatment of prisoners of war. (In March 2004, Miller was transferred to Iraq and placed in charge of the entire prison system of the American occupation.)

In April 2003, Miller had requested permission to adopt 20 interrogation methods at Guantanamo, involving sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme temperatures, forced nudity during interrogations, the use of dogs, and other forms of “sensory assault.” The request had been approved at the highest levels of the Pentagon and the John Ashcroft-led Department of Justice.

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld had personally paved the way for this use of torture when he publicly scoffed at the Geneva Convention, asserting that the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay were not protected by international law. Rumsfeld personally traveled to Iraq, in the midst of the Miller mission, and on Sept. 6, 2003, he visited the execution chamber at Abu Ghraib.

In contentious testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee May 12, Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Stephen Cambone admitted that General Miller returned to Washington and fully briefed his deputy, Gen. William “Jerry” Boykin, on the mission, and on his recommendations for ramping up the pressure on key prisoners through more aggressive interrogation techniques. Miller had now improved his list to 50 aggressive techniques, to be used on the targeted prisoners, and virtually all of them violated the Geneva Convention and even the Army’s own regulations banning torture.

General Boykin is still under investigation for his off-the-wall remarks before a fundamentalist church, equating the Bush Administration’s war on terrorism with the Crusades, and for his vicious denunciations of Islam and all Muslims. Boykin famously declared that George W. Bush had been placed into the White House “by God.” Despite, or, perhaps, because of this Manichean mentality, Rumsfeld insisted that Boykin accept the post as Cambone’s deputy, and even arranged for Boykin to get his third star, as an incentive to take the post. Boykin has a long track record as a loose-cannon Special Forces cowboy. He was personally involved in the tragic incident in Mogadishu, Somalia, made famous by the book *Blackhawk Down*, as well as in the murder of Medellín Cartel boss Pablo Escobar.

Boykin’s “shoot first” record and reputation suggest that the Iraq “dirty war” scandals may go beyond the torture at Abu Ghraib. Among the other assets under the control of the newly created Cambone-Boykin Pentagon intelligence office are Special Forces units, including Task Force 121 and “Grey Fox,” which are engaged in highly classified proactive counterterrorism work.

Top-Down Coverup

According to news accounts and testimony before Congress, top Pentagon officials, including Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Richard Myers (USAF), were informed about the existence of photographs and videotapes of torture at Abu Ghraib in a secured phone call from Gen. John Abizaid, head of the Central Command, in mid-January 2004. Reports of the torture had been circulating as early as July 1, 2003, when Amnesty International issued a report, accusing the U.S. military of subjecting Iraqi prisoners to “cruel, inhumane, or degrading” conditions.

While the Pentagon appointed Gen. Antonio M. Taguba on Jan. 31 to conduct a formal probe of the torture at Abu Ghraib, top military and civilians at the Defense Department attempted to prevent the story from reaching the public. General Myers admitted, at Senate hearings, that he had personally called executives at CBS “60 Minutes” and convinced them to postpone airing an exposé of the torture for several weeks, and later, attempted unsuccessfully to get them to censor the photographs altogether.

A month before the Taguba report was completed on

March 3, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provided the Coalition Forces with a damning 24-page investigation summary, charging that prisoners had been tortured to death, and subjected to forms of cruelty in violation of the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions.

The general public was kept in the dark about all these developments until a copy of General Taguba’s report was leaked to *The New Yorker* magazine journalist Seymour Hersh, and the now-infamous photographs of the torture at Abu Ghraib aired on “60 Minutes.”

The Abu Ghraib revelations produced an immediate outcry for Rumsfeld’s firing as Secretary of Defense. As has been the case, repeatedly, since the beginning of the Bush Administration, Vice President Dick Cheney weighed in—before President Bush—and declared that Rumsfeld was the greatest Defense Secretary in American history, and had Cheney’s full backing. Speaking on May 7, Cheney arrogantly ordered the U.S. Congress to “lay off” Rumsfeld. Beast-Man Cheney, in effect, dared Congress to touch a hair on Rumsfeld’s head; Cheney put President Bush in the unenviable position of having to back up his Vice President, by paying a visit to the Pentagon the next day, to deliver his “me too” endorsement of the decision Cheney had made, and made public.

Many Questions Unanswered

Cheney’s efforts to sweep the Iraq “dirty war” scandals under the rug will not work. There are many, many unanswered questions, already provoked by the first days of hearings before Congress. General Taguba told Senators on May 12 that there were, to his personal knowledge, at least two “third-country interrogators” implicated in the crimes at Abu Ghraib. These comments have provoked widespread speculation that Israeli interrogators may be on the ground in Baghdad, as sub-contractors to companies like CACI and Titan. These private companies have a pool of translators and interrogators fully integrated with the official military intelligence units.

The *Daily Star*, a Beirut newspaper, reported on May 11 that Jack London, Chairman and CEO of CACI, traveled to Israel in January, along with a delegation of defense contractors, Congressmen, and lobbyists. The trip was partially bankrolled by Jerusalem Fund of Aish HaTorah, and included a visit to Beit Horon, “the central training camp for the anti-terrorist forces of the Israeli police and the border police” in the West Bank.

Several U.S. and Israeli intelligence sources have also pointed to the bizarre business partnership between West Bank-based lawyer Mark Zell and Salem Chalabi, the nephew of Iraqi National Congress head Ahmed Chalabi. According to one source, the Zell-Chalabi duo have “a lock” on most of the security contracts in U.S.-occupied Iraq. Zell is the law partner of Doug Feith, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy.