

International Intelligence

Highest Brit Court Nixes Torture-Gained Evidence

Britain's highest court has ruled unanimously that evidence gained by torture cannot be used against defendants. The Dec. 8 ruling by the seven Law Lords upholds an appeal brought by 10 men who were arrested in 2001 on grounds they were a threat to national security. While the Special Immigration Appeals Commission ruled at that time that the government had "sound material" to support the charges, the men's lawyers said that evidence used against them was obtained by torture while they were detained in U.S. camps, and should have been excluded. Home Secretary Charles Clarke insisted that the ruling would have no bearing on the government's attempts to fight terrorism, since Britain does not ever use evidence obtained by torture.

Russia Pans U.S.-Planned Military Bases in Romania

Russian officials have responded with anger to U.S. arrangements to set up military bases in Romania. At a Dec. 7 press conference in Brussels, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said "changes in military configurations" were supposed to "be transparent and should not violate the agreements on stability in Europe. It's important to have an idea about the purpose of such reconfigurations."

During her recent visit to Romania, U.S. Secretary Condoleezza Rice concluded an agreement with that government to establish the U.S. bases—the first ever in former East Bloc countries in Europe.

Lavrov said that Russia wants an explanation of how the expansion relates to the revised Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, which, "regrettably, our western colleagues have not ratified."

Also on Dec. 7, First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said in a televised statement, that Russia may reconsider abiding by the CFE, if the U.S. military presence creeps closer to its borders. "The expansion of U.S. and NATO infrastructure to Russia's borders raises a

question about the fate of the CFE," Ivanov said. Ivanov cited the U.S.-Romanian agreement, saying, "We are aware of such plans. The American government has informed us. But we still do not know how many bases may be deployed and the number of units they may house. We will probably give our response after these aspects are clarified."

Ivanov also strongly defended Russia's just-finalized sale of 29 Tor-M1 surface-to-air missiles to Iran, which the U.S. State Department has denounced. "This contract is totally legitimate," said the Russian defense minister. "Russia hasn't violated any of its international obligations, and Iran isn't now subject to international sanctions."

Germany: No Backdown About Rice's Admission

Following the meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Angela Merkel, Germany's new Chancellor, Merkel told a Dec. 6 press conference that the case of the U.S. abduction of Khaled el-Masri, a German of Lebanese descent, "was accepted as a mistake by the U.S. government." A barrage of denials from the U.S. State Department and Rice's delegation were then thrown against Merkel. But, a German government spokesman replied that "the statement by the Chancellor, as she said it yesterday, was valid and . . . I do not need to interpret it any further." State Department and White House spokesmen were grilled by reporters on Dec. 7, after Rice admitted "a mistake," and about other statements she made, trying to distance the U.S.A. from torture.

Argentina, Brazil Sign Nuclear Energy Pact

Argentina and Brazil signed a "Joint Statement on Nuclear Policy," Nov. 30, which commits the countries to promote concrete programs which will further integrate the nations' work on nuclear power plants, nuclear research plants, and in nuclear medicine and

other industrial uses of nuclear energy.

The statement asserts: "In particular, taking into account the context of the growing reevaluation of nuclear energy as a source of reliable, sustainable, clean and safe electricity, [the two nations' Presidents] call upon the respective competent bodies and companies in this sector to promote the joint development of a new model of power reactor, which would allow both nations to meet the future demands of their growing economies."

Law Legalizing Torture Is Passed in Australia

The state of Victoria has passed a law which legalizes torture, even torturing someone to death, if it is as the result of a "sudden or extraordinary emergency." Titled "Crimes (Homicide) Bill 2005", and passed on Nov. 17, the full implications of the law — i.e., that it legalizes torture—have just become public.

Australia's pro-torture lobby is ecstatic. The real leader of that lobby is Prime Minister John Howard.

Howard has:

- allowed two Australian citizens to be tortured in Guantanamo Bay.
- silenced several Australian military lawyers who tried to blow the whistle on the torture at Abu Ghraib long before it became public.
- appointed Australia's foremost torture advocate, Deakin University Law School head Prof. Mirko Bagaric, to the board of the Refugee Review Tribunal, whose (invariably nasty) decisions on the fate of refugees can not be appealed to any Australian court—the result of an earlier Howard fascist law. Bagaric authored a piece in *The Age* of May 15, 2005 entitled "The Case for Torture".

The Howard government has brazenly tortured "illegal immigrants" in "detention centers" around the country.

Australia's Law Council, hardly a radical body, has charged that "The legal profession believes that the ramifications of these laws have the potential to be as terrifying as terrorism itself."