

US Admits to “Cold Cell” Torture

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It ends up that something called “Cold Cell” torture was the most widely used torture technique used by the United States in the fight against terrorism. Government operatives “praised” hypothermic torture as the most effective of all the techniques they employed. When the less redacted previously released torture documents were made available to the public, the new revelations revealed how wide spread hypothermic torture was utilized, in many facilities it was used every night, all night long, and all year round. Apparently, hypothermic torture produced the largest amount of actionable intelligence, it produced it “consistently,” and it worked in the shortest amount of time. Water boarding it ends up, was the least used. The eeriest was something called the “box.” With the “box” a captive would be folded up and locked into a box the size of a foot locker. No air or light could get in. After two days of sheer panic in the box, what emerged was a psychological vegetable.

The United States finally described cold cell torture they used on Private Manning, the Army soldier that leaked national secrets to WikiLeaks. The US Military brigs, both in Charleston and Quantico, have entire wings of temperature controlled hypothermic torture chambers. At night Private Manning was stripped naked and locked onto a cold metal slab. The air conditioning units blew 45 degree air into the cell at great speed. Private Manning curled into the fetal position and shook violently all night long. There was no way to sleep when the body sustains that level of pain. The constant shivering causes severe pain after a while. That level of pain lasted all night long. During the day Private Manning was allowed to dress and sleep, but the nights were reserved for punishing torture.

The danger of cold cell torture occurs if the victim becomes hypothermic, that is the shivering turns into the rapid reduction of body temperature. Hypothermia can start at any temperature lower than 71 degrees. Within hours the victim’s body is cooled off until the brain dies or the heart fails. It is a horribly painful death. If the medical staff does not catch the temperature reduction in time, the victim falls below the temperature from which they can save their lives. There is only enough time to say your goodbyes. The victim lingers in agonizing pain for a week before the heart seizes and the brain dies.

The United States had an initial problem with their detainees as many just died from hypothermia while in the cold cell all night. The guards would find them dead the next morning. Rules ensued and eventually nurses had to be present to monitor the victim’s temperatures, but the use of cold cell torture continues inside the United States. It is illegal outside the United States.

The United States not only uses hypothermic torture chambers in its bases in the US, so does the sheriff of Charleston County, South Carolina. Sheriff James Cannon, built his jail in 1994 with a single hypothermic torture chamber located just off the main booking area. He got the idea from the Charleston Navy Brig down the road. Both facilities even have identical pod design. The booking guards use the cold cell to "cool off" uncooperative inmates until they are willing to comply. The cell is also used for inmates that the booking guards just want to punish based on the severity of their crimes.

Sheriff Cannon is not the only sheriff that uses cold cell torture in South Carolina. In 2009, the sheriff in Columbia, South Carolina murdered one of his inmates in his hypothermic torture chamber. The inmate lingered in pain for a week in the hospital until he died.

Below is an excerpt from my petition to the US Supreme Court. I had done some research into cold cell torture at other facilities across the country. I repeat it here:

In 2009, California authorities accidentally left an inmate in a cold cell overnight. Due to excessive air conditioning, Elisha McCoy was found the next morning with a core body temperature of 93 degrees. After several days of intensive care, Mr. McCoy survived. In 2006 a not so fortunate Willie Daniels, who was on psychiatric watch in the jails hospital, died from severe hypothermia. Guards had removed Mr. Daniels blanket as is customary on suicide watch. Guard's thought the inmate was sleeping when in reality, Mr. Daniels core body temperature dipped to 79 degrees. He died under their close supervision. In January 2003, guards at the Columbia South Carolina jail, found inmate Bobby Mott comatose in his cell. His body temperature was 95 degrees. Inmate Bobby Mott had been placed in a cold cell. Mr. Mott expired a week later in the hospital of complications due to hypothermia as a result of excessive air conditioning... The Case of Charles Platcher, Illinois: Mr. Platcher was discovered one morning unconscious in his cell. When they got him to the hospital his core body temperature was 84 degrees. Mr. Platcher died of severe hypothermia in the jails air-conditioned cold cell... The Case of Gul Rahman: Mr. Rahman, an innocent Muslim in Afghanistan, was confined to the CIA prison "Salt Pit" a notorious dark prison in 2002. Jailers found Mr. Rahman dead in his cold cell. Mr. Rahman died from hypothermia the night before. The death sent shock waves through the intelligence community and changed US policy forever, but the US secretly destroyed the body, to prevent discovery of hypothermic death. His family had no body to bury.

I became aware of Sheriff Cannons cold cell because in April of 2006, he used it to almost kill me. They lowered my body temperature down to 88 degrees in 9 hours and I slipped into coma. In the ninth hour, the nurse, Cassandra Goodyear, entered the chamber, could not detect a heartbeat or respirations, she left the chamber and gave the order that I remain in the torture chamber for another 24 hours. They had to have more time to explain my cold temperature, lest my death be detected as hypothermia. I had to have died of heart failure to keep the death from making the local newspaper.

In 2008 I filed a federal lawsuit against South Carolina and the sheriff for torture. The problem was that down the road from the county jail is the Charleston Navy Brig that was

housing two really bad terrorists, Jose Padilla and Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri. Both were also US citizens and they both had filed federal lawsuits claiming cold cell torture. The poor federal judges in Charleston had to all of a sudden deal with three lawsuits which revealed that not only does the United States have torture chambers inside the US, so does the local sheriff. Their friend and cohort, Sheriff Cannon, was using a cold cell to torture as well. There was no way the terrorists lawsuits could even have been allowed to proceed as it would set the precedent from which all those innocent Muslims that we tortured all over the globe would eat out of the US Treasury for decades.

That means that my lawsuit was caught between two terrorists and national security. My case could have never been allowed to precede either.

The United States removed the secrecy of entire wings of cold cell torture chambers that they kept in hiding at their military penal facilities. Then came the Private Manning admission of torture and explanation of how cold cell torture worked. It was the public outcry from the cold cell torture of Private Manning that caused the US to stop the torture and the transferred Private Manning to a normal federal prison.

Somehow, I had become the defacto candle bearer protecting the United States from a torture lawsuit that would set a bad precedent. I suffered further to support national security. I did not volunteer for that role. I am a victim.

As a nation we have to stop using cold cell torture chambers. We are killing citizens with them. Those doors need to be welded shut. The citizens we put in our jails, have to be provided life support. We cannot withhold life support. The inmates have to be provided some level allowing their bodies to be able to sleep at night.

Please contact your elected representatives and ask them to make cold cell torture illegal. Tell them to outlaw cold cell torture. And then call your local county sheriff and demand proof that his jail does not have any cold cells. Demand to interview the inmates, they will tell you everything. For those interested in more details on my story, please visit <http://davidbardes.com>, or by davidbardes@davidbardes.com.