

Review

## Torture, capitalism, and the new white man's burden

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The not so recent distribution of the Abu Ghraib photos throughout the United States and the world brought forth the detection of a practice that is commonly used by the U.S. and its "satellite states." For the mainstream U.S. American public, it was a shocking and horrifying discovery. For others, such as Carlos Mauricio who "had flashbacks when he saw the guy with the hood (at Abu Ghraib)," the photos were a terrible reminder of a "counter terrorism" practice that is implemented to subdue "communist/terrorist insurgents." Following the publication of the Abu Ghraib photos, U.S. representatives, with the help of the media, "manufactured consent" by dismissing the photos as "not representing America" and blaming the atrocious acts committed within the photos on a "few bad apples". There are those who were not fooled, as well as others who would like to know how we, as a society, can end this dreadful practice. This piece will expose some ideas that may, in fact, contribute to ending the practice of torture by the United States. It will analyze and critique institutions and ideologies, such as racism and capitalism that are so fundamental to the U.S. and create conditions ripe for torture to thrive.

**Key words:** Abu Ghraib, american exceptionalism, capitalism, Torture, War, White man's burden.

### THE NEW WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

One of the major obstacles hindering the end of the practice of torture by the US is what was dubbed "American Exceptionalism." This is the belief that the "United States and the American people hold a special place in the world." Furthermore, it is the belief that American ideas and values are superior to those found around the globe. This exceptionalist ideology is perceived around the world as arrogance and has come to be resented. Critics of the term recognize it "as an ideology intent on creating an 'imperial America' by converting the world to its ideas."<sup>1</sup> This line of thought leads to an obstinacy that does not allow any other perspective to be heard; anything that strays away from the norm of U.S. tradition is ridiculed, devalued, and labeled unpatriotic.

The basis of U.S. American Exceptionalism, the idea that our way of life is superior to others, is not a new phenomenon. In fact, if one evaluates the rise of the West, beginning with Columbus's "discovery" of the "New

World" and the subsequent colonization, one will observe that Europeans have used and maintained some form of exceptionalist discourse to subjugate an "inferior" group of people. This subjugation, driven by greed, was enforced using tactics that in the current era would be considered some of the worst human rights violations ever witnessed. One such witness, Bartolome de Las Casas, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish priest, described some of the torture tactics used to subdue the "primitive beasts." The Spanish soldiers would construct "some low wide gallows on which the hanged victim's feet almost touched the ground, stringing up their victims in lots of thirteen, in memory of Our Redeemer and His twelve Apostles, then set burning wood at their feet and thus burned them alive."<sup>2</sup>

The foundation of American Exceptionalism can also Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, from "sea to shining sea." This idea was first implemented by the Jacksonian

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 11

<sup>2</sup> Bartolome De Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 34.

be compared to Manifest Destiny, which was the belief that the United States was destined to expand from the Democrats in the 1840s to expand the U.S. westward.

On those Western lands were, of course, various so-called indigenous tribes. The fate of the Western U.S. tribes would be much like those in Florida, “captured . . . and sent on to Arkansas [concentration camps].” Much like current society’s misrepresentation of all Arab Muslims as “crazed fundamentalist terrorists,” the enemies of the United States in the 1850s were also misrepresented. Like the Spanish before them, the US viewed and portrayed the Natives as “a set of poor, miserable looking savages.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1899, *McClure Magazine* published Rudyard Kipling’s infamous poem, *The White Man’s Burden, The United States and the Philippine Islands*. The poem, written in the aftermath of the Spanish American War, encouraged the United States to re-colonize the Philippine Islands, a place where the Spanish had already brutally suppressed the inhabitants during colonization. The poem called for America to:

Take up the White Man’s burden-- Send forth the best ye breed; Go bind your sons to exile; To serve your captives’ need; To wait in heavy harness; On fluttered folk and wild; Your new-caught, sullen peoples; Half-devil and half-child.<sup>4</sup>

“Taking up the White Man’s Burden” became the discourse used by the United States, and most of Western Europe as well, to brutally colonize the Philippines, much of Africa, and portions of Southwest Asia.

Presently, the inhabitants of Southwest Asia have become the “New White Man’s Burden.” Like the Filipinos before them, and the many other peoples that have been subjugated in the name of true “civilization,” Muslims and Arabs are being depicted and spoken of as needing someone to help foster their “advancement” as human beings. As George Bush reminded citizens during his speech to the National Endowment for Democracy, the people of Southwest Asia were unable to root out the “evils” of terrorism by themselves, but were indeed “good and capable people of the Middle East,” whom “all deserve responsible leadership.” President Bush’s speech continuously reinforced this message of the “New White Man’s Burden.”

As this next section will bring to light, the United States has no real concern over the spread of democracy. As President Nixon stated in 1977, “in terms of our own self-interest, the right wing dictatorship, if it is not exporting its revolution, if it is not interfering with its neighbors, if it is not taking action directed against the United States, it is of no

security concern to us.”<sup>5</sup> It is only a concern when the financial interests of the United States are at stake. Just as the fight against “communism” was actually the fight to secure free markets, the “War on Terror” is a means to secure a fundamental resource that “fuels” Western markets.

### Capitalism and Torture

Capitalism and torture are historically linked. Beginning with the discovery of the “New World,” torture was used to subdue the “primitive beasts.” The native inhabitants of the Americas were exploited for their gold and labor. The Spanish prospered and became the hegemon of Western Europe. With a combination of weak immune systems and a violent regime of torture and mass murder, the native inhabitants of the Americas were almost completely annihilated.

Another group of people would soon be the survivors of mass exploitation and torture. Africans, who were tortured from the point of their enslavement up until the Emancipation Proclamation, were treated so in the name of profit. The proceeds of African enslavement catapulted the West into a position of hegemony. Following the freeing of Africans, a new system of exploitation would arise and torture would remain linked. The age of imperialism witnessed a scramble between European powers, as well as the United States, to colonize various regions of the world. After World War II, the world witnessed the decline of Western Europe and the rise of anti-colonial movements. A few Western powers sought to hold onto their conquests. France attempted to subdue its imperial subjects in Algeria and Vietnam. It did so by not only waging a bloody war, but also inflicting a cruel regime of torture.

After the age of imperialism, a new type of exploitation would arise. This one was hidden under the rhetoric of fighting communism. The United States would turn to covert war in order to manipulate markets, often times supporting and financing ruthless, violent regimes who used torture to subjugate their populations.

Currently, in an attempt to maintain its hegemony, the United States has turned to overt means. Under the guise of the “War on Terror,” the United States is attempting to secure the resource needed to fuel its capitalist empire. As the case with many other subjugated peoples who resist aggression and influence, the people of Southwest Asia are doing the same. Just as the French did in Algeria, the United States uses torture as a tactic to subdue those who resist.

### The Philippines: Tortured Twice

In 1898, at the end of the Spanish American War, the

<sup>3</sup> “Indians In Florida,” *New York Times*, 10 April 1852.

<sup>4</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The White Man’s Burden*, 1899, <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_White\\_Man's\\_Burden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_White_Man's_Burden)> (22 November 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Graham Hovey, “Nixon Saw Cuba and Chile Enclosing Latin America,” *New York Times*, 26 May 1977, p. 30.

United States sought to claim its booty. In Paris, the Spanish agreed to cede its territories of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, and the Philippines. While the Europeans were transferring power, the people of the Philippines were celebrating their independence. In the United States, there was much debate on the future of the islands. Advocates for the re-colonization of the Philippines called for the subjugation of the islanders for their own benefit. It was argued that failure to colonize "would leave the islands open to seizure by another power which might treat the natives with far greater harshness." This was the discourse used to colonize the Philippines. Opponents, such as Mark Twain and the Anti-Imperialist League, argued against colonialism and the racist ideology that accompanied it. The true reason the United States was interested in the Philippines "was the demand for markets and for profitable investment by the exporting and financial classes within each imperialist regime."<sup>6</sup>

Emilio Aguinaldo and his followers did not greet the United States as "saviours." In fact, the United States was met with heavy resistance from the people of the Philippines. The Filipinos had recent memories of oppressive Spanish colonial rule and hoped to avoid further exploitation. Recognizing that the Philippines were indeed the "pearl of the Orient," the U.S. acted quickly to quell the resistance. As a means to subdue the "half-devil, half-child" inhabitants, the United States resorted to a cruel regime of torture. One of its most widely used forms of torture, which would come to fruition over a hundred years later, was that of the water cure. Lt. Grover Flint, who served in the Philippines during the war, described the practice to the United States Senate:

A man is thrown down on his back and three or four men sit or stand on his arms and legs and hold him down . . . a carbine barrel or a stick as big as a belying pin . . . is simply thrust into his jaws and his jaws are thrust back, and, if possible, a wooden log or stone is put under his head or neck, so he can be held more firmly. In the case of very old men I have seen their teeth fall out--and I mean when it was done a little roughly. He is simply held down and then water is poured onto his face down his throat and nose from a jar; and that is kept up until the man gives some sign or becomes unconscious. And then . . . he is simply . . . rolled aside rudely, so that water is expelled.<sup>7</sup>

It took the United States nearly three years to subdue the Philippine resistance. The Philippines would be a colony ruled by the United States until 1946. During this time, the people of the Philippines were granted technical independence and were ruled by a conservative oligarchy linked closely to the United States.

Between 1946 and 1972, the Philippine economy rapidly expanded. The benefactors were those who normally benefit as a result of neo-liberal economic reforms. The business owners of the United States, as well as the wealthy elite of the Philippines, grew rich, while the disparity between the rich and the poor grew even larger. As a result of this exploitative and elite-dominated society, social unrest began to compound. This unrest resulted in the declaration of martial law by Ferdinand Marcos in 1972. Marcos acted quickly to instill fear in the people of the Philippines. Following his declaration, widespread arrests of oppositional leaders and intellectuals soon followed.<sup>8</sup> In 1982, Amnesty International released a report entitled *An Account of Torture, Disappearances, Extrajudicial Executions and Illegal Detention*. This report described what happened to those who were deemed "enemies of the state." Just three years after the declaration of martial law, 50,000 Filipinos were arrested. Many of them were blindfolded and taken to secret holding centers known as "safehouses" where they would be tortured. Amnesty International (1982: 4) also noted that reported instances of torture increased significantly after 1972.

The torture techniques used at these safehouses varied tremendously. There were reports ranging from electroshocks to cigarette burning. One "political prisoner" reported that he was "forced to lie with his naked body suspended between two beds and [was] beaten and kicked in the stomach and thighs" everytime he would sag or fall. Others who were illegally detained reported that they were forced by Philippine soldiers to play Russian Roulette as a way to extract information. Some reported having their head dunked into barrels of water until they passed out. Stress positions and sleep deprivation were also prevalent.<sup>9</sup>

The United States' and rest of the world's support for the Philippine dictator during the "state of emergency" was generous. Foreign investment poured into the Philippines, while the rights of its people declined. While Marcos spent millions on beautifying the city of Manila, 85% of the inhabitants of the Eastern Visayas could not afford to enter a hospital. Foreign capital invested in the Philippines more than doubled per annum after 1972. U.S. aid to the Philippines came mainly in the form of military training and equipment. This aid came during a period that witnessed an increase in torture and other human rights violations. Herman and Chomsky argue that there is a correlation that can be seen with many other U.S. "client" states around the world.<sup>10</sup>

This brief account of the Philippines is important for two reasons. First, it highlights an example in which the United States took direct action to obtain and conquer a territory using specific torture tactics in order to subdue a resistant

<sup>6</sup> Theodore P. Greene, ed., "Introduction," in *American Imperialism in 1898*, (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1955), pg 1.

<sup>7</sup> Richard E Welch Jr, "American Atrocities in the Philippines: The Indictment and the Response," *The Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 43 (May, 1974): p. 235.

<sup>8</sup> Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), p. 230-233.

<sup>9</sup> Jeri Laber, "Philippines' Torture," *New York Times*, 30 Oct. 1976, pg. 25.

<sup>10</sup> Chomsky and Herman, *Third World Fascism*, 238-239

population. Second, it highlights the correlation between the favorable investment climate in the Philippines, United States' support, and the increased use of torture. The Philippine example is strikingly similar to the United States' present circumstances. The United States invaded, and is currently occupying, a foreign country in order to expand its sphere of influence and to benefit economically, all in the name of bringing true "civilization" to a despotic people. By securing Iraq, the United States not only obtains a valuable resource needed to fuel its empire, but also creates an environment that is suitable for foreign investment. In order for the U.S. to secure Iraq, it must first eliminate the resistance. Much like the tactics used to suppress the Filipinos over 100 years ago, the United States has turned to torture. In order to obtain a better understanding of the current situation in Southwest Asia, Operation Condor and the U.S. role in Latin America must first be examined.

### Milton Friedman and the Latin American Experiment

The United States has a long history in Latin America. Following President James Monroe's State of the Union Address in 1823, the U.S. would play a vital role in shaping the economic climate in Latin America. From the United Fruit Company to the United States government, intervention in America's "backyard" has become the norm. Furthermore, when Milton Friedman "dreamed of depatterning societies, of returning them to a state of pure capitalism, cleansed of all interruptions—government regulations, trade barriers, and entrenched interests," he turned to Latin America.<sup>11</sup> This became a place where the people would not only feel the effects of *lassiez faire* economics, but also the debilitating effects of torture.

During the 1950s, while the United States was "containing communism," various regions around the world challenged the power of capitalism and the U.S. In the Southern Cone of Latin America, developmentalism was taking root. U.S. corporations were losing profits, while many Latin Americans called for the redistribution of land and the nationalization of industries. This was a direct threat to capitalism and, as a result, the U.S. would turn to covert means to eliminate the threat to mass profits.<sup>12</sup>

In Latin America, CIA intervention would be used, along with another strategy to defeat the spread of "communism." In 1953, two U.S. American men visited Santiago, Chile. They were Albion Patterson, director of an agency that would later become USAID, and Theodore Schultz, chairman of the Department of Economics at the University of Chicago. Both men felt that the war against communism was an ideological one. Their plan was to eliminate state-centered economics at its roots. This

would entail a U.S. sponsored program that would send Latin American students to the University of Chicago to learn that "governments must remove all rules and regulations standing in the way of the accumulation of profits." Second, they would learn that governments "should sell off any assets they own that corporations could be running at a profit." Lastly, they would learn that "they should dramatically cut back funding of social programs."<sup>13</sup> These ideals are the fundamentals of capitalism, which are laid out in Milton Friedman's book *Capitalism and Freedom*.<sup>14</sup>

By 1973, hundreds of Latin American students received a top notch economics education at the University of Chicago. Hundreds more students received their *lassiez-faire* comprehension at various institutions within South America that had been established under the close supervision of the Chicago School of Economics. When Augusto Pinochet declared his own war on communism and ousted the democratically elected Salvadore Allende, this represented the end of 160 years of peaceful democratic rule in Chile. It also marked the beginning of a series of authoritarian regimes that would gain power and use torture as a means to suppress those who were against neo-liberal reform. Many graduates of the Chicago School would obtain various positions within these totalitarian regimes and would play a key role in bringing about unadulterated capitalism in the Southern Cone.

### The First "War on Terror"

After the first 9/11 in 1973, Augusto Pinochet was determined to prevent the spread of communism to Latin America. He quickly formed an alliance with Paraguay and Argentina and would later align himself with the rest of the Southern Cone. Their operation would later be known as Condor. As a result of this secret collaboration, thousands of Latin Americans, whom "the vast majority were educated young men and women involved in movements to challenge economic and social injustice,"<sup>15</sup> would be murdered, disappeared, or tortured. For the most part, the United States turned a "blind eye" to the atrocities. When Jimmy Carter took office in January of 1976, he made a commitment to human rights and set out to distance the U.S. from those who committed heinous acts. However, as argued by John Dinges, "based on the declassified evidence, the CIA and other U.S. agencies encouraged and supported the integration of the security forces of Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia."<sup>16</sup> In other words, the United

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 56-57

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that Latin America was not the only region that was influenced by the Chicago School of Economics. To see the full extent of U.S. economic interference in the "third world," see Naomi Kline's *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*.

<sup>15</sup> John Dinges *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York: The New Press, 2004), pg. 2

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 250

<sup>11</sup> Naomi Kline, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, (New York: Henry Holt Books, 2007), p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 58

States encouraged and supported Operation Condor.

It is hard to pinpoint the extent of U.S. involvement during the Condor years due to much of the information remaining classified. However, some insight can be obtained by examining the documents that have been declassified. In a Memorandum of Conversation between Pinochet and Henry Kissinger, dated June 8<sup>th</sup> 1976, the two discussed human rights violations and military aircrafts. Kissinger assured Pinochet that “in the United States, as you know, we are sympathetic with what you are trying to do here...we wish you well.”<sup>17</sup> He also informed Pinochet that “Congress is now debating further restraints on aid to Chile, over the issue of human rights. We are opposed. But, basically we don’t want to intervene in your domestic affairs...If we defeat the Kennedy amendment ...we will deliver the F-5E’s as we agreed to do.” In response, Pinochet informed Kissinger that Congress was being misinformed by various dissidents. He told Kissinger that “Letelier has access to the Congress.” Pinochet also reassured Kissinger that the human rights violations would cease.<sup>18</sup> That assertion turned out to be a lie. In fact, the man Pinochet was referring to in his conversation with Henry Kissinger was Orlando Letelier, a man who would later become the victim of state sponsored terrorism when his car in Washington D.C. was blown up by a bomb detonated by remote control. There is significant evidence that Pinochet gave the order. There is also speculation, with some evidence, that indicates the United States may have been aware of the plot.

In a different declassified document, dated September 1976, the United States acknowledged the existence of Operation Condor. The document recognized all parties involved in the interstate security apparatus that was developed. It was even acknowledged that Condor had reached Phase III of its operation. The document stated that “a third and most secret phase of “Operation Condor” involves the formation of special teams from member countries who are to travel anywhere in the world to non-member countries to carry out sanctions up to assassination against terrorists or supporters of terrorist organizations.”<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned previously, it is hard to pinpoint the exact role the United States played in Operation Condor. According to John Dinges, who sifted through thousands of pages of declassified documents from the United States and Latin America, “the United States maintained liaison with Condor operations, provided training and material support to the Condor data bank and communications system, and received and disseminated

intelligence generated by Condor kidnappings and torture.”<sup>20</sup>

The member states of Operation Condor all practiced torture, some more than others. As Dinges pointed out, the United States provided military training, which included interrogation techniques, to members of Operation Condor. From the year 1959 to 1979, approximately 82,000 Latin Americans were trained by the United States military.<sup>21</sup> One of the most famous U.S. military schools, which is formerly known as the School of the Americas, provided training specifically for counterinsurgency. According to Jeffrey Stein, by 1977, “more than 170 graduates of the U.S. Army’s ‘School of the Americas,’ were heads of governments, Cabinet Ministers, commanding generals, or directors of intelligence in their own countries. The entire Chilean junta had been the beneficiary of United States military training at one time or another.”<sup>22</sup> One of the most brutal, the deputy director of the National Intelligence Directorate (DINA) under Pinochet, was a graduate from the School of the Americas.

Once again, it is difficult to prove that the United States was directly responsible for the spread of torture techniques used by the military juntas during Condor.

One can only assume, from the evidence that is available, that the United States is indeed to blame, at least partially, for the variety of techniques used. It is a fact that certain techniques were taught at the School of the Americas during the time period of 1963 to 1987.

This is known from the declassification of seven interrogation manuals that were used during the specified time period. One can also assume that the same techniques were taught from the time period of 1963 to 1987 from the evidence provided by the torture victims themselves.

In a play written by Griselda Gambaro entitled *The Walls*, the main character, known as the “young man,” is subjected to a cruel regime of psychological torture before he is murdered. From the point of the “young man’s” incarceration up until his death, the captors played a series of “mind games” that were meant to disorient the victim. Every day that passed, the walls of the room enclosed a little further. The clock that was on the wall when the “young man” arrived was removed. At one point, one of the captors encouraged the “young man” to look out of the window to see the beautiful view. When the “young man” opened the curtain, he found not a window, but a brick wall. Throughout the play, “the young man” was bombarded with rhetoric that was nonsensical. Gambaro’s play is a resemblance of events that actually occurred during Argentina’s “Dirty War.” More disturbing, is the fact that the illustration above resembles the techniques described in the CIA

<sup>17</sup> Henry Kissinger and Augusto Pinochet, “Memorandum of Conversation,” *Department of State*, 8 June, 1976, pg. 2. Accessed through the National Security Archive, 28 Nov. 2008

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 4

<sup>19</sup> Operation Condor declassified document, “Chilbom” *Department of State*, Sep. 1976, Pg. 2, Accessed through the National Security Archive, (1 Dec. 2008)

<sup>20</sup> Dinges, *Condor Years*, p. 250

<sup>21</sup> John Samuel Fitch, “Human Rights and the US military Training Program,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Nov. 1981): p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> Jeffrey Stein, “Grad School for Juntas,” *The Nation* (21 May 1977) p. 624

interrogation manuals that were declassified.<sup>23</sup>

Under the section entitled "Regression" in the *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual* (HRETM), the author of the document gives various examples to gain "control of the environment." Some of the examples given included: persistent manipulation of time, retarding and advancing clocks, serving meals at odd times, disrupting sleep schedules, disorientation regarding day and night, and nonsensical questions. The document further explains that "thwarting any attempt by the subject to relate to his new environment will reinforce the effects of regression and drive him deeper and deeper into himself."<sup>24</sup> The examples given do not directly reflect the torment that the "young man" endured during Gambaro's play. However, as the manual explains, "the number of variations in techniques is limited only by the experience and imagination" of those who are doing the torturing.<sup>25</sup>

Many of the techniques showcased in the CIA interrogation manuals were brought to the public's attention in an article published by the *New York Times* in 1988. Florencio Caballero, a former Sergeant in the Honduran Army, explained the techniques that he learned in Texas under the tutelage of the CIA. "They taught us psychological methods—to study the fears and weaknesses of a prisoner, make him stand up, don't let him sleep, keep him naked and isolated, put rats and cockroaches in his cell, give him bad food, serve him dead animals, throw cold water on him, change the temperature..."<sup>26</sup> Caballero's description of the tactics taught by the CIA match the recollections given by those who suffered from torture under the military juntas in the Southern Cone.

One such survivor, a Jewish Chilean who recalled her first abduction, noted that upon detention she was hooded and taken to an undisclosed location. She was then subjected to various torture tactics, which included sleep deprivation, rape, menace by dogs, water boarding, electric shocks, and cigarette burns. After six months of detention, she was finally released. She then fled to Great Britain in exile, only to return to Chile after ten years. Upon her return, she was once again detained. This time she was given "the full treatment," which included electric shocks, water boarding, rape, truth serum, sleep deprivation, and solitary confinement.<sup>27</sup>

Many of the torture tactics used in Latin America reflect those that are laid out in the CIA training manuals. One tactic that can not be accounted for is the use of

electroshock, which seems to have been used on a systemic level. Caballero failed to mention to the *New York Times* that electroshock was a method used in Honduras. However, one of his victims came forward and exposed the dirty practice. It is difficult to determine whether or not the United States was responsible for spreading electro-torture to South America. As pointed out by Darius Rejali, the use of electric devices varies between the different states in the Southern Cone. The only way the United States can be linked to the spread of electric shock in Latin America, is if one takes into account that Latin Americans may have taken it upon themselves to use different electric devices.

### The Second "War on Terror"

In an attempt to maintain its hegemony, the United States has turned to actions that resemble those taken following the end of the Spanish American War. In an outright act of aggression, the United States invaded and continues to occupy a foreign nation for economic purposes.

September 11, 2001, gave the U.S. the excuse needed to invade. Much like the first "War on Terror," the aggression is aimed towards those resistant to unfair economic policies, which include an unequal distribution of oil wealth. Those who are resistant face some of the same atrocities that were committed against those who resisted in Latin America. Torture and "extraordinary rendition" have become a general practice used by the United States as a means to quell the Southwest Asian resistance. The current era's "War on Terror" is a mixture of covert and overt operations.

Like Operation Condor, the United States is part of a massive intelligence "strategy [that seeks to] eliminate terrorist threats abroad."<sup>28</sup> The United States shares and collects data, through one of its many intelligence gathering organizations, in order to track down suspected "terrorists." Many of these "terrorists" are innocent bystanders, whose names were given to the United States by someone who was being tortured or who was placed on a "watch list" for one reason or another. For example, Mr. Arar, a 34 year old native Syrian, was abducted by American authorities at Kennedy Airport in New York on September 26, 2002. He was kidnapped, because his name was on a watch list for terrorist suspects. Arar was accused of being a co-worker of a person in Canada whose brother was a suspected terrorist. As a result of this, Arar was shackled, hooded, and flown to Syria where he was tortured.<sup>29</sup>

These stories, unfortunately, are commonplace in today's "War on Terror." In December of 2006, the United

<sup>23</sup> Marguerite Feitlowitz, ed., *Information for Foreigners* (Evanston Ill: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1992) p. 13-66

<sup>24</sup> CIA, "Human Resource Exploitation training manual" pg. K-14. <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/index.htm#hre>> (11 Dec. 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., I-6

<sup>26</sup> James LeMoyné, "Testifying to Torture," *New York Times*, 5 June 1988, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Rabbis for Human Rights, *Testimony from a Jewish Chilean Torture Survivor*, 2008, <<http://www.rhr-na.org/resource/testimony-from-a-jewish-chilean-torture-survivor>> (9 Dec. 2008).

<sup>28</sup> George W. Bush, *President Discusses War on Terror*, 8 March 2005 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/03/20050308-3.html>> (9 Dec. 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Bob Herbert, "Torture American Style," *New York Times*, 5 June 1988, pg. 1.

Nations adopted the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance. As of today, eighty states have signed and five have ratified. It will become active once twenty states have ratified the convention. As defined by Article 2 of the Convention Against Enforced Disappearance:

The arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of de-privation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law.

According to a joint report published by Amnesty International, Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (NY School of Law), Human Rights Watch, and the Center for Constitutional Rights, Cageprisoners, and Reprive, at least 36 Arab/Muslims have “disappeared.”

The United States has its own “Condor.” In fact, as pointed out by Chalmers Johnson, “since at least 1981, what had once been an informal covert intelligence sharing arrangement among the English-Speaking countries has been formalized under the code name ‘Echelon.’”<sup>30</sup> “Echelon” is a collection of satellites, in which each member state has their own. The information that is collected onto these satellites is then downloaded to a computer. Each member programs the computer to recognize key words, names, telephone numbers, and anything else that can be programmed into the computer. They then search the massive downloads and share the information with allies. This intelligence gathering and sharing plays a vital role in the “War on Terror.” So, when a suspected “terrorist” is spotted by a member security agency, she or he will be shackled, hooded, and flown by private U.S. airliners to one of the many torture chambers around the world.

The comparison to Operation Condor is not meant to place the United States in the same category as those who “disappeared” thousands of Latin Americans. In Latin America, it was commonplace for the juntas to abduct numerous people at one time and either kill them and dispose of their bodies in mass graves or take them on “death flights,” in which they were thrown out of airplanes into the Atlantic Ocean. In the case of the United States, many Arabs/Muslims are considered “disappeared,” because their exact whereabouts remain unknown. Most of those who have been abducted are probably being held captive in one of the many “black sites” that the United States has designated as detention/interrogation centers. Under a few circumstances, those detained have been murdered under interrogation and their bodies have been secretly disposed. The correlation was made, because it is important to show the extent of practices that are used to suppress a resistant population

in different circumstances.

If the declassification of U.S. interrogation manuals was not enough evidence to prove that the United States condones or practices certain torture tactics, then the photos of Abu Ghraib should have been adequate proof. However incriminating the pictures were, the United States found a way to escape blame for the atrocities committed, at least here in the United States. There were numerous strategies used to avoid blame. One strategy was to blame the acts on a “few bad apples.” Another strategy used was to conduct an “official investigation” that would clear the United States of any wrong doing. In the official report, the authors concluded that “the pictured abuses, unacceptable even in wartime, were not part of authorized interrogations nor were they even directed at intelligence targets.”<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that, in the entire document, the word torture was never mentioned. Many of the photos that can be viewed publicly, which constitute torture, were not even mentioned in the report.

The photos did in fact expose authorized torture techniques that were explained in great detail in the declassified interrogation manuals. In the *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual*, under the heading of “Arrest and Handling of Subjects,” it is explained that “...to achieve surprise and the maximum amount of mental discomfort. He should therefore be arrested at a moment when he least expects it. The subject should be rudely awakened and immediately blindfolded [or hooded] and handcuffed.”<sup>32</sup> This procedure can be seen in numerous documentaries that were filmed in Iraq. The scenes, no matter which film is being viewed, play out almost identically. A Marine or an Army unit kicks in the door of a suspected “terrorist” hideout, screaming profanities at the victims inside. Once inside the Arab residence, the viewer of the documentary can see that many of the occupants are women and children who are usually petrified. The Army or Marine unit then handcuff the men of the house, normally with zip ties, place a sand bag over their heads, and then put them on the Humvee where they will be taken to an undisclosed location and possibly tortured. Of course, when these military units kick down the doors, it is normally during the early morning hours when the victims “least expect it.”

Another torture tactic used that was made visible by the photos of Abu Ghraib is stress positions. The HRETM acknowledges that “the torture situation is an external threat, a contest between the subject and his tormentor. The pain which is being inflicted upon him from outside himself may actually intensify his will to resist.” On the other hand, “pain which he feels he is inflicting upon himself is more likely to sap his resistance.” An example given: “...if he is required to maintain rigid positions such as standing at attention or sitting on a stool for long

<sup>30</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), p. 165.

<sup>31</sup> Steven Strasser, ed., *The Abu Ghraib Investigations* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> CIA, Human Exploitation, p. f-1

periods of time. The immediate source of pain is not the 'questioner' but the subject himself. His conflict is then an internal struggle."<sup>33</sup> There are numerous photos that depict detainees handcuffed in various positions, often times in the nude.

## Conclusion

The comparison between the U.S. American involvements in the Philippines, Latin America and Iraq was made because all three areas shared very distinct characteristics. All three locations were exploited, in one way or another, by capitalist interests and torture. The comparison made between the United States and the Latin American military Juntas was not an attempt to demonize the United States. It was meant to bring awareness. The security apparatus that the United States is using today, which includes "Echelon," is very similar to the one used during "Condor." The US has made intelligence gathering and sharing efficient and effective. This could be due, in small part, to the relationship the United States had with Condor.

The comparison was made between the two "Wars on Terror," because they are strikingly similar. Anyone under the Junta's rule that was deemed a "terrorist," was dehumanized, subjected to torture, disappearance, and without protections of the law. Today's "War on Terror" is the same. Suspected "terrorists" are being refused their rights under domestic and international law. Many of the victims who are detained and tortured are ordinary people who happen to be Muslim and "may" be associated with someone who "may" be linked to terrorism. The fortunate thing for most Westerners is that they are Christian and White. Unfortunately, others such as Joseph Thomas, a white Australian Muslim who was tortured in Pakistan, cannot escape this reality. Ever since the passing of the Military Commissions Act, the rights that we thought we enjoyed could easily be violated. Just imagine traveling abroad and for some odd reason you have been identified as a "terror" suspect. Your name could have been placed on a "list" from a joke you told on the telephone. So please, reconsider not only what it means to be an "American," but ultimately what it means to be a human being.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., unknown page