



Office of the Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

April 17, 2009

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller IV
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-4802

Dear Senator Rockefeller:

This responds to your letter of February 3, 2009, which requested declassification and release of a narrative regarding advice provided by the Department to the Central Intelligence Agency on the legality of the CIA's use of certain interrogation techniques.

As you know, we have worked with Committee staff in reviewing the narrative for this purpose and we are pleased to advise you that this process has now been completed. We are transmitting the now declassified narrative to you with this letter for the further action necessary in order to disclose the document.

We appreciate the leadership that you and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence have demonstrated on these important issues. We also are grateful for your patience as we have worked through the process leading to this declassification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Holder", written in a cursive style.

Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Dennis C. Blair, Director of National Intelligence
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
The Honorable Christopher S. Bond, Vice Chairman, Senate Select Committee on
Intelligence
Mr. Gregory B. Craig, Counsel to the President
Mr. James L. Jones, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

RELEASE OF DECLASSIFIED NARRATIVE DESCRIBING
THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL'S OPINIONS ON
THE CIA'S DETENTION AND INTERROGATION PROGRAM

SENATOR JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV
APRIL 22, 2009

PREFACE

The release of the following declassified narrative completes an effort that I began last year as Chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence. The document is an effort to provide to the public an initial narrative of the history of the opinions of the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel (OLC), from 2002 to 2007, on the legality of the Central Intelligence Agency's detention and interrogation program.

In August 2008, I asked Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey to join the effort to create such an unclassified narrative. The Attorney General committed himself to the endeavor, saying that if we failed it would not be for want of effort. Over the next months, Committee counsel and representatives of the Department of Justice, CIA, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and the office of the Counsel to the President discussed potential text. The shared objective was to produce a text that, putting aside debate about the merits of the OLC opinions, describes key elements of the opinions and sets forth facts that provide a useful context for those opinions, within the boundaries of what the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Intelligence Community would recommend in 2008 for declassification.

The understanding of the participants was that while the final product would be a Legislative Branch document, the collaborative nature of this process would provide the Executive Branch participants with the opportunity to ensure its accuracy. Before the end of the year, this process produced a narrative whose declassification DOJ, the DNI and the CIA supported. However, the prior Administration's National Security Council did not agree to declassify the narrative.

I renewed this effort in early February as soon as Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., took office. Except for this preface, some minor edits, and the addition of a final paragraph to bring the narrative up to date as of President Obama's Executive Orders of January 22, 2009, this document is the same as the one that secured support for declassification last year. This declassification, which National Security Adviser James L. Jones effected on April 16, 2009 and Attorney General Holder transmitted to the Committee on April 17, 2009, is supported again by the DOJ, the DNI, and the CIA. Because the text of the narrative was settled prior to the release on April 16, 2009 of the declassified OLC opinions from August 2002 and May 2005, the narrative does not include additional information from those opinions that is now in the public domain.

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV

OLC OPINIONS ON THE CIA DETENTION AND INTERROGATION PROGRAM

Submitted by Senator John D. Rockefeller IV for Classification Review

On May 19, 2008, the Department of Justice and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) provided the Committee with access to all opinions and a number of other documents prepared by the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice (OLC) concerning the legality of the CIA's detention and interrogation program. Five of the documents provided addressed the use of waterboarding. Committee Members and staff reviewed these documents over the course of several weeks; however, the Committee was not allowed to retain copies of the OLC documents about the CIA's interrogation and detention program.

The Committee had previously received one classified OLC opinion—an August 1, 2002, OLC opinion—in May 2004 as an attachment to a special review issued by the CIA's Inspector General on the CIA's detention and interrogation program. The opinion is marked as "Top Secret." The Executive Branch initially provided access to this review and its attachments to the Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman and staff directors. On September 6, 2006, all Members of the Committee obtained access to the Inspector General's review. The August 1, 2002, opinion is currently the only classified OLC opinion in the Committee's possession as to the legality of the CIA's interrogation techniques.

The capture of Abu Zubaydah and the initiation of the CIA detention and interrogation program

In late March 2002, senior Al-Qa'ida operative Abu Zubaydah was captured. Abu Zubaydah was badly injured during the firefight that brought him into custody. The CIA arranged for his medical care, and, in conjunction with two FBI agents, began interrogating him. At that time, the CIA assessed that Abu Zubaydah had specific information concerning future Al-Qa'ida attacks against the United States.

CIA records indicate that members of the National Security Council (NSC) and other senior Administration officials were briefed on the CIA's detention and

interrogation program throughout the course of the program.¹ In April 2002, attorneys from the CIA's Office of General Counsel began discussions with the Legal Adviser to the National Security Council and OLC concerning the CIA's proposed interrogation plan for Abu Zubaydah and legal restrictions on that interrogation. CIA records indicate that the Legal Adviser to the National Security Council briefed the National Security Adviser, Deputy National Security Adviser, and Counsel to the President, as well as the Attorney General and the head of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice.

According to CIA records, because the CIA believed that Abu Zubaydah was withholding imminent threat information during the initial interrogation sessions, attorneys from the CIA's Office of General Counsel met with the Attorney General, the National Security Adviser, the Deputy National Security Adviser, the Legal Adviser to the National Security Council, and the Counsel to the President in mid-May 2002 to discuss the possible use of alternative interrogation methods that differed from the traditional methods used by the U.S. military and intelligence community. At this meeting, the CIA proposed particular alternative interrogation methods, including waterboarding.

The CIA's Office of General Counsel subsequently asked OLC to prepare an opinion about the legality of its proposed techniques. To enable OLC to review the legality of the techniques, the CIA provided OLC with written and oral descriptions of the proposed techniques. The CIA also provided OLC with information about any medical and psychological effects of DoD's Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) School, which is a military training program during which military personnel receive counter-interrogation training.

On July 13, 2002, according to CIA records, attorneys from the CIA's Office of General Counsel met with the Legal Adviser to the National Security Council, a Deputy Assistant Attorney General from OLC, the head of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, the chief of staff to the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Counsel to the President to provide an overview of the proposed interrogation plan for Abu Zubaydah.

On July 17, 2002, according to CIA records, the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) met with the National Security Adviser, who advised that the CIA could proceed with its proposed interrogation of Abu Zubaydah. This advice,

¹ Descriptions of these meetings are based on contemporaneous CIA records that Committee staff has reviewed. The Committee has not conducted a complete search of Executive Branch records, nor has it requested records or testimony from all of the individuals whom CIA records included as having participated in these meetings.

which authorized CIA to proceed as a policy matter, was subject to a determination of legality by OLC.

On July 24, 2002, according to CIA records, OLC orally advised the CIA that the Attorney General had concluded that certain proposed interrogation techniques were lawful and, on July 26, that the use of waterboarding was lawful. OLC issued two written opinions and a letter memorializing those conclusions on August 1, 2002.

August 1, 2002 OLC Opinions

On August 1, 2002, OLC issued three documents analyzing U.S. obligations with respect to the treatment of detainees. Two of these three documents were unclassified: an unclassified opinion interpreting the federal criminal prohibition on torture, and a letter concerning U.S. obligations under the Convention Against Torture and the Rome Statute. Those two documents were released in 2004 and are publicly available.

The third document issued by OLC was a classified legal opinion to the CIA's Acting General Counsel analyzing whether the use of the interrogation techniques proposed by the CIA on Abu Zubaydah was consistent with federal law. OLC had determined that the only federal law governing the interrogation of an alien detained outside the United States was the federal anti-torture statute. The opinion thus assessed whether the use of the proposed interrogation techniques on Abu Zubaydah would violate the criminal prohibition against torture found at Section 2340A of title 18 of the United States Code. The Department of Justice released a highly redacted version of this opinion in July 2008 in response to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit.

The classified opinion described the interrogation techniques proposed by the CIA. Only one of these techniques—waterboarding—has been publicly acknowledged. In addition to describing the form of waterboarding that the CIA proposed to use, the opinion discusses procedures the CIA identified as limitations as well as procedures to stop the use of interrogation techniques if deemed necessary to prevent severe mental or physical harm. Although a form of “waterboarding” has been employed on U.S. military personnel as part of the SERE training program, the Executive Branch considers classified the precise operational details concerning the CIA's form of the technique.

The opinion also outlined the factual predicates for the legal analysis, including the CIA's background research on the proposed techniques and their possible effect on the mental health of Abu Zubaydah. The opinion described the information provided by the CIA concerning whether "prolonged mental harm" would be likely to result from the use of those proposed procedures. Because the military's SERE training program, like the CIA program, involved a series of stressful interrogation techniques (including a form of waterboarding) the opinion discussed inquiries and statistics relating to possible adverse psychological reactions to SERE training.

The anti-torture statute prohibits an act "specifically intended" to inflict "severe physical or mental pain or suffering." The opinion separately considered whether each of the proposed interrogation techniques, individually or in combination, would inflict "severe physical pain or suffering" or "severe mental pain or suffering." The opinion also considered whether individuals using the techniques would have the mental state necessary to violate the statute.

The opinion concluded that none of the techniques individually was likely to cause "severe physical pain or suffering" under the statute. With respect to waterboarding, the OLC opinion concluded that the technique would not inflict "severe physical pain or suffering" because it does not inflict actual physical harm or physical pain. The opinion concluded that, although OLC did not then believe physical suffering to be a concept under the statute distinct from physical pain, waterboarding would not inflict severe suffering, because any physical effects of waterboarding did not extend for the protracted period of time generally required by the term "suffering."

The OLC opinion also concluded that none of the techniques would constitute "severe mental pain or suffering" as that term is defined under the anti-torture statute. The opinion concluded that under the anti-torture statute, "severe mental pain or suffering" requires the occurrence of one of four specified predicate acts, as well as "prolonged mental harm." The opinion interpreted "prolonged mental harm" to require harm of some lasting duration, such as mental harm lasting months or years.

With respect to waterboarding, based on information provided by the CIA, the OLC opinion assessed whether it constituted, as a legal matter, one of the four predicate acts under the mental harm component of the anti-torture statute. The opinion concluded that the technique would not cause "severe mental pain or suffering" because, based on the U.S. military's experience with the form of

waterboarding used in its SERE program, the CIA did not anticipate that waterboarding would cause prolonged mental harm.

After evaluating the proposed techniques individually, the OLC opinion considered whether the combined use of the proposed interrogation techniques would cause “severe physical pain or suffering” or “severe mental pain or suffering.” OLC concluded that the combined use of the interrogation techniques would not constitute severe physical pain or suffering, because individually the techniques fell short of and would not be combined in such a way as to reach that threshold. The opinion concluded that OLC lacked sufficient information concerning the proposed use of the techniques to assess whether their combined use might inflict one of the predicate conditions for severe mental pain or suffering. The opinion concluded, however, that even if a predicate condition would be satisfied, it would not violate the prohibition because there was no evidence that the proposed course of conduct would produce any prolonged mental harm.

Finally, the opinion addressed whether an individual carrying out the proposed interrogation procedures would have the specific intent to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering required by the statute. It concluded that the interrogator would not have the requisite intent because of the circumstances surrounding the use of the techniques, including the interrogator’s expectation that the techniques would not cause severe physical or mental pain or suffering, and the CIA’s intent to include specific precautions to prevent serious physical harm.

For those reasons, the classified opinion concluded that none of the proposed interrogation techniques, used individually or in combination, would violate the criminal prohibition against torture found at section 2340A of title 18 of the United States Code.

Events after issuance of August 1, 2002 OLC opinion

According to CIA records, after receiving the legal approval of the Department of Justice and approval from the National Security Adviser, the CIA went forward with the interrogation of Abu Zubaydah and with the interrogation of other high-value Al-Qa’ida detainees who were then in, or later came into, U.S. custody. Waterboarding was used on three detainees: Abu Zubaydah, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, and Khalid Sheikh Muhammad. The application of waterboarding to these detainees occurred during the 2002 and 2003 timeframe.

In the fall of 2002, after the use of interrogation techniques on Abu Zubaydah, CIA records indicate that the CIA briefed the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee on the interrogation.² After the change in leadership of the Committee in January of 2003, CIA records indicate that the new Chairman of the Committee was briefed on the CIA's program in early 2003. Although the new Vice-Chairman did not attend that briefing, it was attended by both the staff director and minority staff director of the Committee. According to CIA records, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee were also briefed on aspects of the program later in 2003, after the use of interrogation techniques on Khalid Sheikh Muhammad.

In the spring of 2003, the DCI asked for a reaffirmation of the policies and practices in the interrogation program. In July 2003, according to CIA records, the NSC Principals met to discuss the interrogation techniques employed in the CIA program. According to CIA records, the DCI and the CIA's General Counsel attended a meeting with the Vice President, the National Security Adviser, the Attorney General, the Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Counsel, a Deputy Assistant Attorney General, the Counsel to the President, and the Legal Adviser to the National Security Council to describe the CIA's interrogation techniques, including waterboarding. According to CIA records, at the conclusion of that meeting, the Principals reaffirmed that the CIA program was lawful and reflected administration policy.

According to CIA records, pursuant to a request from the National Security Adviser, the Director of Central Intelligence subsequently briefed the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense on the CIA's interrogation techniques on September 16, 2003.

In May 2004, the CIA's Inspector General issued a classified special review of the CIA's detention and interrogation program, a copy of which was provided to the Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman and staff directors in June of 2004. The classified August 1, 2002, OLC opinion was included as an attachment to the Inspector General's review. That review included information about the CIA's use of waterboarding on the three detainees.

² Just as the statement does not purport to identify all Executive Branch meetings and documents on the CIA detention and interrogation program, the statement does not purport to describe either all Executive Branch communications or briefings to the Committee about, or the limitations on the Committee's use of and access to information about, the CIA's program.

After the issuance of that review, the CIA requested that OLC prepare an updated legal opinion that incorporated actual CIA experiences and practice in the use of the techniques to date included in the Inspector General review, as well as legal analysis as to whether the interrogation techniques were consistent with the substantive standards contained in the Senate reservation to Article 16 of the Convention Against Torture.

Article 16 of the Convention Against Torture requires signatories to “undertake to prevent in any territory under its jurisdiction other acts of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment which do not amount to torture.” The Senate reservation to that treaty defines the phrase “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment” as the treatment prohibited by the Fifth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. Thus, the CIA requested that OLC assess whether the interrogation techniques were consistent with the substantive provisions of the due process clause, as well as the constitutional requirement that the government not inflict cruel or unusual punishment.

In May 2004, after the issuance of the Inspector General review, CIA records indicate that the CIA’s General Counsel met with the Counsel to the President, the Counsel to the Vice President, the NSC Legal Adviser, and senior Department of Justice officials about the CIA’s program and the Inspector General review.

In June 2004, OLC withdrew its unclassified August 1, 2002, opinion on the anti-torture statute. OLC did not, however, withdraw the classified August 1, 2002 opinion, because it concluded that the classified opinion was narrower in scope than the unclassified opinion that was withdrawn. The classified opinion applied the anti-torture statute to the CIA’s specific interrogation methods, but, unlike the unclassified August 1, 2002, opinion, it did not rely on or interpret the President’s Commander in Chief power or consider whether torture could be lawful under any circumstances.

In July 2004, the CIA briefed the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee on the facts and conclusions of the Inspector General special review. The CIA indicated at that time that it was seeking OLC’s legal analysis on whether the program was consistent with the substantive provisions of Article 16 of the Convention Against Torture.

According to CIA records, subsequent to the meeting with the Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman in July 2004, the CIA met with the NSC Principals

to discuss the CIA's program. At the conclusion of that meeting, it was agreed that the CIA would formally request that OLC prepare a written opinion addressing whether the CIA's proposed interrogation techniques would violate substantive constitutional standards, including those of the Fifth, Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments regardless of whether or not those standards were deemed applicable to aliens detained abroad.

DOJ Advice from June 2004 to May 2005

Following the withdrawal of the unclassified August 1, 2002, opinion in June 2004, OLC began work on preparing an unclassified opinion concerning its interpretation of the anti-torture statute. At the same time, in accord with the request described above, OLC worked on classified opinions that would evaluate the specific techniques of the CIA program, individually and in combination, under its revised interpretation of the anti-torture statute, as well as an opinion that would evaluate whether the program was consistent with the substantive provisions of Article 16 of the Convention Against Torture.

On July 14, 2004, in unclassified written testimony before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, an Associate Deputy Attorney General explained the Department of Justice's understanding of the substantive constitutional standards embodied in the Senate reservation to Article 16 of the Convention Against Torture. The official's written testimony stated that under Supreme Court precedent, the substantive due process component of the Fifth Amendment protects against treatment that "shocks the conscience." In addition, his testimony stated that under Supreme Court precedent, the Eighth Amendment protection against Cruel and Unusual Punishment has no application to the treatment of detainees where there has been no formal adjudication of guilt.

While OLC worked on drafting new opinions with respect to the CIA program, the CIA continued its interrogation of high-value Al-Qa'ida detainees in U.S. custody. On July 22, 2004, the Attorney General confirmed in writing to the Acting Director of Central Intelligence that the use of the interrogation techniques addressed by the August 1, 2002, classified opinion, other than waterboarding, would not violate the U.S. Constitution or any statute or treaty obligation of the United States, including Article 16 of the Convention Against Torture. On August 6, 2004, the Acting Assistant Attorney General for OLC advised in writing that, subject to the CIA's proposed limitations, conditions and safeguards, the CIA's use of waterboarding would not violate any of those legal restrictions. The letter noted that a formal written opinion would follow explaining the basis for those

conclusions. According to the CIA, the CIA nonetheless chose not to use waterboarding in 2004. Waterboarding was not subsequently used on any detainee, and was removed from CIA's authorized list of techniques sometime after 2005.

On December 30, 2004, the Office of Legal Counsel issued an unclassified opinion interpreting the federal criminal prohibition against torture, 18 USC 2340-2340A, superseding in its entirety the withdrawn August 1, 2002, unclassified opinion. That December 30, 2004, opinion included a footnote stating "While we have identified various disagreements with the August 2002 Memorandum, we have reviewed this Office's prior opinions addressing issues involving treatment of detainees and do not believe that any of their conclusions would be different under the standards set forth in this memorandum."

In January of 2005, in response to a question for the record following his confirmation hearing, Attorney General Gonzales indicated that "the Administration . . . wants to be in compliance with the relevant substantive constitutional standard incorporated in Article 16 [of the Convention Against Torture], even if such compliance is not legally required." Attorney General Gonzales further indicated that "the Administration has undertaken a comprehensive legal review of all interrogation practices. . . . The analysis of practices under the standards of Article 16 is still under way."

The CIA briefed the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee on the CIA's interrogation program again in March 2005. At that time, the CIA indicated that it was waiting for a revised opinion from OLC.

May 2005 Opinions

In May 2005, OLC issued three classified legal opinions analyzing the legality of particular interrogation techniques. The first legal opinion analyzed the legality of particular interrogation techniques, including waterboarding, under the interpretation of the federal criminal prohibition against torture set forth in the December 30, 2004, unclassified opinion. The May 2005 opinion includes additional facts about the proposed techniques and a more extensive description of the applicable legal standards than the August 1, 2002, opinion.

With respect to waterboarding, the opinion concluded that while the technique presented a substantial question under the statute, the authorized use of waterboarding, when conducted with measures identified by the CIA as safeguards

and limitations, would not violate the federal criminal prohibition against torture. To understand the possible effects of waterboarding, the May 2005 opinion relied on the military's experience in the administration of its form of the technique on American military personnel who had undergone SERE training, while recognizing some limitations with that reliance, such as the expectations of the individual going through the practice. The opinion also relied on the CIA's experience with the use of its form of waterboarding on the three detainees in 2002 and 2003.

The opinion concluded that waterboarding does not cause "severe physical pain" because it is not physically painful. It further reasoned that the CIA's form of waterboarding could not reasonably be considered specifically intended to cause "severe physical pain." The opinion also concluded that under the limitations and conditions adopted by the CIA, the technique would not be expected to cause distress of a sufficient intensity and duration to constitute "severe physical suffering," which the December 30, 2004 unclassified opinion had recognized to be a separate element under the federal anti-torture statute. The opinion concluded that waterboarding would not cause "severe mental pain or suffering" because OLC understood from the CIA that any mental harm from waterboarding would not be "prolonged," even if it met a predicate condition under the statute.

OLC's second legal opinion issued in May 2005 addressed the legality of the combined use of particular techniques, including waterboarding, under the criminal prohibition against torture. That opinion relied on information provided by the CIA concerning the manner in which the individual techniques were proposed to be combined in the CIA program. After considering the combined use of techniques as described by the CIA, OLC concluded that the combined use of the proposed techniques by trained interrogators would not be expected to cause the severe mental or physical pain or suffering required by the criminal prohibition against torture.

OLC's third legal opinion in May 2005 assessed the legality of particular interrogation techniques under Article 16 of the Convention Against Torture. The Executive Branch had previously concluded that Article 16 does not apply to detainees, such as those in CIA custody, who were held outside territory under U.S. jurisdiction. Nonetheless, as articulated in the January 2005 testimony of the Attorney General, the Executive Branch had decided to comply, as a matter of policy, with the relevant substantive constitutional standards incorporated in Article 16. Because of that policy determination, and because of the CIA's request that OLC address the substantive "cruel, inhuman or degrading" standard, OLC analyzed whether a number of interrogation techniques, including waterboarding,

would violate the substantive constitutional standards contained in the Senate reservation to CAT.

The May 2005 opinion on Article 16 concluded that the CIA's use of interrogation techniques, including waterboarding, on senior members of al-Qa'ida with knowledge of, or involvement in, terrorist threats would not be prohibited by the Fifth, Eighth or Fourteenth Amendments under the particular circumstances of the CIA program. OLC concluded that with respect to the treatment of detainees in U.S. custody, who had not been convicted of any crime, the relevant constitutional prohibition was the "shocks the conscience" standard of the substantive due process component of the Fifth Amendment. Under the "shocks the conscience" standard, OLC concluded that Supreme Court precedent requires consideration as to whether the conduct is "arbitrary in the constitutional sense" and whether it is objectively "egregious" or "outrageous" in light of traditional executive behavior and contemporary practices.

To assess whether the CIA's interrogation program was "arbitrary in the constitutional sense," OLC asked whether the CIA's conduct of its interrogation program was proportionate to the governmental interests involved. Applying that test, OLC concluded that the CIA's interrogation program was not "arbitrary in the constitutional sense" because of the CIA's proposed use of measures that it deemed to be "safeguards" and because the techniques were to be used only as necessary to obtain information that the CIA reasonably viewed as vital to protecting the United States and its interests from further terrorist attacks.

OLC also concluded that the techniques in the CIA program were not objectively "egregious" or "outrageous" in light of traditional executive behavior and contemporary practice. In reaching that conclusion, OLC reviewed U.S. judicial precedent, public military doctrine, the use of stressful techniques in SERE training, public State Department reports on the practices of other countries, and public domestic criminal practices. OLC concluded that these sources demonstrated that, in some circumstances (such as domestic criminal investigations) there was a strong tradition against the use of coercive interrogation practices, while in others (such as with SERE training) stressful interrogation techniques were deemed constitutionally permissible. OLC therefore determined that use of such techniques was not categorically inconsistent with traditional executive behavior, and concluded that under the facts and circumstances concerning the program, the use of the techniques did not constitute government behavior so egregious or outrageous as to shock the conscience in violation of the Fifth Amendment.

Before the passage of the Detainee Treatment Act, in October of 2005, the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for OLC noted in response to questions for the record: “[I]t is our policy to abide by the substantive constitutional standard incorporated into Article 16 even if such compliance is not legally required, regardless of whether the detainee in question is held in the United States or overseas.” Similarly, in December of 2005, both the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser stated publicly that U.S. policy was to treat detainees abroad in accordance with the prohibition on cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment contained in Article 16.

Subsequent Developments in the Law

In December 2005, Congress passed the Detainee Treatment Act (DTA), and the President subsequently signed it into law on December 30, 2005. That Act applied the substantive legal standards contained in the Senate reservation to Article 16 to the treatment of all detainees in U.S. custody, including those held by the CIA. At the time of the passage of the DTA, the Administration had concluded, based on the May 2005 OLC opinion, that the CIA’s interrogation practices, including waterboarding, were consistent with the substantive constitutional standards embodied in the DTA.

In June 2006, in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, the Supreme Court held that Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention applied to the conflict with Al-Qa’ida, contrary to the position previously adopted by the President. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions requires that detainees “shall in all circumstances be treated humanely,” and prohibits “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment” and “violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture.” At the time of the *Hamdan* decision, the War Crimes Act defined the term “war crime” to include “a violation of Common Article 3.”

In August 2006, OLC issued two documents considering the legality of the conditions of confinement in CIA facilities. One of the documents was an opinion interpreting the Detainee Treatment Act; the other document was a letter interpreting Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, as enforced by the War Crimes Act. These documents included consideration of U.S. constitutional law and the legal decisions of international tribunals and other countries.

On September 6, 2006, the President publicly disclosed the existence of the CIA's detention and interrogation program. On the same day, the CIA briefed all Committee Members about the CIA's detention and interrogation program, including the CIA's use of enhanced interrogation techniques.

In October 2006, Congress passed the Military Commissions Act (MCA) to set forth particular violations of Common Article 3 subject to criminal prosecution under the War Crimes Act. Specifically, the MCA amended the War Crimes Act to designate nine actions as grave breaches of Common Article 3, punishable under criminal law. Although only these nine violations of Common Article 3 are subject to criminal prosecution, Congress recognized that Common Article 3 imposes additional legal obligations on the United States. The MCA provided that the President has the authority "to interpret the meaning and application of the Geneva Conventions and to promulgate higher standards and administrative regulations for violations of treaty obligations which are not grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions."

In July 2007, the President issued Executive Order 13440, which interpreted the additional obligations of the United States imposed by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. In conjunction with release of that Executive Order, OLC issued a legal opinion analyzing the legality of the interrogation techniques currently authorized for use in the CIA program under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, the Detainee Treatment Act, and the War Crimes Act.

The July 2007 opinion includes extensive legal analysis of the war crimes added by the MCA, U.S. constitutional law, the treaty obligations of the United States, and the legal decisions of foreign and international tribunals. The July 2007 opinion does not include analysis of the anti-torture statute but rather incorporates by reference the analysis of the May 2005 opinions that certain proposed techniques do not violate the anti-torture statute, either individually or combined.

In considering "traditional executive behavior and contemporary practices" under the substantive due process standard embodied in the Detainee Treatment Act, OLC considered similar sources to those considered in the May 2005 opinion on Article 16. In addition, OLC examined the legislative history of the MCA, which the President had sought, in part, to ensure that the CIA program could go forward following *Hamdan*, consistent with Common Article 3 and the War Crimes Act. OLC observed that, in considering the MCA, Congress was confronted with the question of whether the CIA should operate an interrogation program for high value detainees that employed techniques exceeding those used

by the U.S. military but that remained lawful under the anti-torture statute and the War Crimes Act. OLC concluded that while the passage of the MCA was not conclusive on the constitutional question as to whether the program “shocked the conscience,” the legislation did provide a “relevant measure of contemporary standards” concerning the CIA program and suggested that Congress had endorsed the view that the CIA’s interrogation program was consistent with contemporary practice.

Because waterboarding was not among the authorized list of techniques, the 2007 OLC opinion did not address the legality of waterboarding. OLC therefore has not considered the legality of waterboarding under either of the two provisions that have been applied to the CIA’s treatment of detainees since the passage of the Detainee Treatment Act in December of 2005: Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and the War Crimes Act, as amended by the MCA.

Present Circumstances

On January 30, 2008, at a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee on Oversight of the Department of Justice, the Attorney General disclosed that waterboarding was not among the techniques currently authorized for use in the CIA program. He therefore declined to express a view as to the technique’s legality. The Attorney General also stated that for waterboarding to be authorized in the future, the CIA would have to request its use, the CIA Director “would have to ask me, or any successor of mine, if its use would be lawful, taking into account the particular facts and circumstances at issue, including how and why it is to be used, the limits of its use and the safeguards that are in place for its use,” and the President would have to address the issue.

In February 2008, in testimony before this Committee, the CIA Director publicly disclosed that waterboarding had been used on three detainees, as previously described. At that same hearing, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) testified that waterboarding was not currently a part of the CIA’s program, and that if there was a reason to use such a technique, the Director of the CIA and the Director of National Intelligence would have to agree whether to move forward and ask the Attorney General for a ruling on the legality of the specifics of the situation. The Committee also discussed the CIA’s interrogation program with those two officials in closed session.

Although waterboarding was no longer a technique authorized for use in the CIA program, and the Attorney General and DNI testified in 2008 that a new legal

opinion based on current law would be required before it could be used again, the May 2005 opinions on the legality of waterboarding under the anti-torture statute and Article 16 of the Convention Against Torture (the legal standards subsequently embodied in the DTA) remained precedents of the Office of Legal Counsel at the time of the Attorney General's and DNI's 2008 testimony.

On January 22, 2009, the President issued Executive Order 13491 on "Ensuring Lawful Interrogations." The Executive Order revoked Executive Order 13440, limited the interrogation techniques that may be used by officers, employees, or other agents of the United States Government, and established a Special Interagency Task Force on Interrogation and Transfer Policies to report recommendations to the President. With respect to prior interpretations of law governing interrogation, section 3(c) of Executive Order 13491 directed that, unless the Attorney General provides further guidance, officers, employees, and other agents of the United States Government may not rely on interpretations of the law governing interrogations issued by the Department of Justice between September 11, 2001, and January 20, 2009.