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Temporary Committee on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transport and illegal detention of prisoners

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on a chronology of events

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 13 Nov. 2001 President George W. Bush signs Presidential Military Order for the Detention, Treatment and Trial of 'illegal combatants'. It covers al-Qaeda terrorists and Taliban who, under the order, are denied the rights granted to prisoners of wars under the Third Geneva Convention.
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/print/20011113-27.html>
- 17 May 2004 Former CIA agent Bob Baer, who worked as a secret agent in the Middle East in the 1990s, states: 'If [the CIA wants] a serious interrogation, [its sends] a prisoner to Jordan. If [it wants] them to be tortured, [it sends] them to Syria. If [it wants] someone to disappear - never to see them again - [it sends] them to Egypt'.
<http://www.newstatesman.com/200405170016>
- 8 June 2004 In an article in the Washington Post, Dana Priest and Jeffrey Smith reveal the existence of a 2002 Justice Department memo and a 2003 Pentagon report which give a much more restrictive definition of torture than that normally used by the US Army and in international conventions.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A23373-2004Jun7.html>
- 5 Oct. 2005 Republican senator John McCain tables an amendment to the Bill on the funding of the Defense Department in 2006, prohibiting cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment of prisoners by US personnel.
<http://mccain.senate.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=NewsCenter>
- 1 Nov. 2005 During a working lunch at which only Republic senators are present, Vice-President Dick Cheney revealed the existence of a system of secret prisons. Cheney's aim was to block the McCain amendment.
mediamatters.org/items/200511090005
- 2 Nov. 2005 The Washington Post publishes an article by Dana Priest on the alleged existence of a secret prisons system, providing details of the previous day's meeting. The article starts with the words: 'The CIA has been hiding and interrogating some of its most important al Qaeda captives at a Soviet-era compound in Eastern Europe'.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/01/AR2005110101644.html>
- 7 Nov. 2005 Human Rights Watch reports that the CIA is running a network of secret prisons not just in some Asian and Middle Eastern countries but also in Europe, and specifically in Poland and Romania. HRW reached this conclusion on the basis of flight records for aircraft used by US Intelligence to carry prisoners from Afghanistan and Iraq to 'black sites' - secret prisons scattered around the world - and to Guantanamo.
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/11/07/usint11995.htm>

- 18 Nov. 2005 An article by Diana Priest in The Washington Post carries details of accounts by various current and former CIA agents of the agency having set up Counter Terrorist Intelligence Centres (CTICs) in various European, Middle Eastern and Asian countries. The article alleges that local and US intelligence services work together, including in organising the rendition of terrorist suspects. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/01/AR2005111702070.html>
- 5 Dec. 2005 An ABC exclusive by Brian Ross and Richard Esposito states that according to CIA sources, two secret CIA prisons in Eastern Europe have been closed following the HRW revelations. The closure and the transfer of prisoners to facilities in the north African desert were allegedly carried out in great haste in the run-up to Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice's visit to Europe. <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/Investigation/story?id=1375123>
- 5 Dec. 2005 Before leaving for Europe, Condoleeza Rice says: 'For decades, the United States and other countries have used "renditions" to transport terrorist suspects [...] to their home country or to other countries where they can be questioned, held, or brought to justice. [...] But there have [...] been [...] cases where, for some reason, the local government cannot detain or prosecute a suspect, and traditional extradition is not a good option. In those cases the local government can make the sovereign choice to cooperate in a rendition. [...] Rendition is a vital tool in combating transnational terrorism. [...] The United States has respected - and will continue to respect - the sovereignty of other countries. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/57602.htm>
- 6 Dec. 2005 Amnesty International publishes a report in which it states that it has information on 800 flights operated by the CIA in European air space and at most European airports. Amnesty obtained the flight records for six civilian aircraft leased by the CIA between September 2001 and September 2005. Over that period, the six aircraft were allegedly used for 800 flights from and to Europe. www.amnesty.org.uk/news/press/16659.shtml
- 8 Dec. 2005 Vincent Cannistraro, former head of counter-terrorism at the CIA, tells Josh Gershtein, staff reporter at The Sun that the prisoner pick-ups and drop-offs should not be considered highly covert because officials in the host countries were aware of the operations. <http://www.nysun.com/article/24129>
- 9 Dec. 2005 The State Department's top legal adviser, John Bellinger, says in Geneva that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has access to 'absolutely everybody' at the prison camp in Guantanamo. When asked if the organisation has access to everybody held in similar circumstances elsewhere, he says: 'No'. He declines to explain further. This is the first time that the US admits not having given the Red Cross access to all prisoners under its control.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4512192.stm>

- 13 Dec. 2005 The Council of Europe appoints Swiss senator Dick Marty rapporteur for an enquiry into alleged secret detentions in member countries.
- 17 Dec. 2005 Statewatch refers to a document that was originally 'classified' from an EU Council meeting of 27 January 2003 on the New Transatlantic Agenda. Paragraph 4.1 of the minutes for the meeting states: 'Both sides agreed on areas where cooperation could be improved [including] the exchange of data between border management services, increased use of European transit facilities to support the return of criminal/inadmissible aliens, coordination with regard to false documents training and improving the cooperation in removals'.
www.statewatch.org/news/2005/dec/05eu-usa-flights.htm
- 5 Apr. 2006 Amnesty International publishes a new report, entitled 'Below the radar: secret flights'. The report refers to the abduction of three Yemenis as a typical example of extraordinary rendition and criticises the interpretation given by European governments to the Chicago Convention by claiming that they have no authority over the alleged CIA flights because they are private rather than commercial.
web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGAMR510512006
- 12 Apr. 2006 Excerpt from a Time magazine article on an interview with John Negroponte, Director of National Intelligence: 'Negroponte also told TIME that three dozen or so of the worst al-Qaeda terrorists held in secret CIA prisons are likely to remain in captivity as long as the "war on terror continues". He added, "These people are being held. And they're bad actors. And as long as this situation continues, this war on terror continues, I'm not sure I can tell you what the ultimate disposition of those detainees will be". Negroponte's comments appear to be the first open acknowledgement of the secret U.S. detention system and the fact that captives such as Khalid Shaikh Mohammad — involved in Sept. 11 or other major attacks on U.S. interests around the world — may be held indefinitely.'
<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1183242,00.html>
- 19 May 2006 Publication of the report of the 36th Session of the UN Committee Against Torture. The report states that:
'The Committee is concerned by allegations that the State party has established secret detention facilities, which are not accessible to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Detainees are deprived of fundamental legal safeguards, including an oversight mechanism in regard to their treatment and review procedures with respect to their detention. The Committee is also concerned by allegations that those detained in such facilities could be held for prolonged periods and face torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The Committee considers the "no comment" policy of the State party regarding the existence of such secret detention facilities, as well as on its intelligence activities, to be regrettable.

(articles 2 and 16).

The State party should ensure that no one is detained in any secret detention facility under its de facto effective control. Detaining persons in such conditions constitutes, per se, a violation of the Convention. The State party should investigate and disclose the existence of any such facilities and the authority under which they have been established and the manner in which detainees are treated. The State party should publicly condemn any policy of secret detention.'

'18. The State party should adopt all necessary measures to prohibit and prevent enforced disappearance in any territory under its jurisdiction, and prosecute and punish perpetrators, as this practice constitutes, per se, a violation of the Convention.'

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/cats36.htm>

23 May 2006 Amnesty International publishes its annual report. Amnesty criticises in particular President Bush's efforts to veto a Congress amendment banning torture and the efforts made by Vice-President Cheney to keep the CIA out of the amendment.

The report also severely criticises European governments, as follows: 'European governments squirmed as one story after another revealed their role as junior partners of the USA in its "war on terror". There was public outcry following media reports of possible collusion between the US Administration and some European governments on "CIA black sites" – alleged secret detention centres on European territory. Increasing evidence that prisoners were being illegally transferred through European airports to countries where there was a risk they would be tortured ("extraordinary renditions") also provoked widespread public condemnation'.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5005754.stm>