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Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Richard Burr is helping Gina Haspel cover up her involvement in the CIA’s torture program, explains former CIA analyst Ray McGovern.

SHARMINI PERIES: Welcome back to my conversation with Ray McGovern. Ray McGovern is a former Army infantry intelligence officer, and then served as a CIA analyst for 27 years, from the Kennedy presidency to the George H.W. Bush presidency. Ray’s duties include chairing the National Intelligence Estimates, and preparing for the president’s daily brief, which included briefing President Ronald Reagan. He joins us today from Washington, D.C. I thank you so much for joining us again, Ray.

RAY MCGOVERN: Most welcome.

SHARMINI PERIES: All right, Ray, so Haspel’s hearings to confirm her as the head of the CIA is underway. And in Segment 1 we showed your opposition to her appointment, as such. But many people think this is a foregone conclusion in terms of her appointment, that you gravely objected to. I want further information as to why we should oppose her candidacy. But before we do that, let’s have a look at another exchange at her hearing.

SPEAKER: Please answer yes or no. Do you believe, in hindsight, that those techniques were immoral?

GINA HASPEL: Senator, what I believe sitting here today is that I support the higher moral

standard we have decided to hold ourselves to.

SPEAKER: Please answer the question.

GINA HASPEL: Senator, I think I've answered the question.

SPEAKER: No, you've not. Do you believe the previous techniques, now armed with hindsight, do you believe they were immoral? Yes or no.

GINA HASPEL: Senator, I believe that we should hold ourselves to the moral standard outlined in the Army Field Manual.

SPEAKER: Ok. So I understand that-. You've not answered the question, but I'm going to move on.

SHARMINI PERIES: All right, Ray, in Segment 1 you took the position that these torture tactics used by the CIA doesn't work for various reasons. Give us, let's start there, let's talk about your evidence that this doesn't work. Because as you said in Segment 1, it is Hollywood that leads you to believe that the torture tactics work, because we see again and again. And we know there is proof that there is such a collaboration between CIA and FBI and U.S. policies, and what the, what Hollywood actually shows us in some of these movies. So give us a sense of where the research and the data is in terms of these type of tactics not working to keep us secure.

RAY MCGOVERN: Well, the best source, really, is the Senate Intelligence Committee investigation based on original CIA documents that showed, after a four year investigation, released, the executive summary was released in December 2014, which showed that the protestations, the arguments surfaced by people like Gina Haspel, most of the actual names are redacted, were not only false, but misleading in the extreme. They kept telling everyone, including the president, this was working, we were getting effective information from these interrogation techniques. But when the cables were looked at scrutinously through these Senate staffers, it was revealed that there was not one piece of information attributable to these

enhanced interrogation techniques that was not gotten by other more traditional means of interrogation, which do not violate the law.

So that was a red herring in the beginning, and she, she knew that, of course. And no one refers to this Senate Intelligence Committee document. And it should not be ignored. The fact that that document was prepared under Dianne Feinstein, the predecessor of Sen. Richard Burr, who is now the chair, and at the very, very end of Sen. Feinstein's tenure, when the Senate was changing hands, and that's the end of 2014, on day one Richard Burr was just about to take the cudgel, the gavel. Guess what happened? They had completed the investigation, and they were delaying until Senator Burr would take the, take that chair. And Feinstein, to her credit, went to Obama. And she did this through the Senate majority leader. And she said, look, we need to publish this document. My people have worked hard, and they've worked on original documents despite the fact that John Brennan tried to hack into our computers. We have the document. You have that printed, Mr. President.

And, and Mr. President Obama cooperated so tightly with John Brennan that he opposed it till the end, until the election in November, when Mark Udall from Colorado, member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, lost his reelection. And so he went to Sen. Feinstein, said, you know, I feel strongly, as strongly as Sen. Wyden does about this. You go tell the president I'm going to read the executive summary from the floor of the Senate. What have I got to lose now? So he's got a choice. I read it from the floor of the Senate, or he releases the redacted version, which disguises Gina Haspel's name. So I can see Obama, I don't know this for sure, but he called up Brennan and goes John, I'm sorry, we can't let the whole thing be read, so I'll just release it. We'll tell the press to downplay it, and sorry, but that's what we do.

So that's on the record. What's the first thing that Sen. Richard Burr did? He said, I own the Senate investigation. I want all copies returned to me, and I want them returned to me immediately. Now, if Haspel and her coconspirators were in charge, which they were, I'm sure they delivered it the next day by courier. The others, there were only five others, I think, and they probably do. But there's one that's extant. It's said to be in the Obama library. Now, we know that, I don't know, maybe 50, 50 years from now we'll know that. So that, that exists. And Burr showed his hand the first day as chairman, said I want all those copies returned. What's in this? That document shows that heinous, heinous techniques, waterboarding is just one of them. How about rectal feeding. OK? Now, rectal hydration could be legitimized in some medical applications. But rectal feeding? What is that all about? That's rape. And there are other things shown in that. Putting people in small boxes. People known to have fear of insects, putting lots of insects. Give me a break. It was awful.

So what does Burr want to do? Burr is joined at the hip with the people he's supposed to be exercising oversight over. It's not an oversight committee. It's an overlook committee. And Burr's been around in that domain for 12 years. He's seen it all. He's approved it all. And it'll be very embarrassing for him to see Haspel go the way that she should go, be rejected. I still hold hope that she will be rejected because in a basic sense of decency that reflects, just reflects the American people and their senators. And so I think that is a good chance that she will be rejected for cause. And that's the only moral solution.

Now, let me just add the moral part here. Is torture wrong because it's illegal? It is illegal, of course. We know that. I mean, Ronald Reagan was the guy that insisted that the U.S. adhere to the United Nations Convention on Torture. Ronald Reagan. And it was signed and approved by George H.W. Bush. So is it illegal? Of course it's illegal. That's why it's wrong. No, it's not wrong because it's illegal. It's illegal because it's just plain wrong. Human beings don't do that to other human beings. That's been understood since the Spanish Inquisition. OK? So if you talk about morality, and as Richard Burr you talk about American moral values, well, it's the moral values that put torture in the same category as rape, or slavery. In philosophy, in ethics, we learned that category is called intrinsic evil, always wrong, no exceptions. And the fact that the law says the same thing, well, it's not the law that makes it wrong. It's the basic American values, it's the basic universal values as reflected in the UN declaration that, that really, Ronald Reagan was, was so in support of.

And so, you know, think back. That was '80, '85 or so. You know, where are we now? I know this story, and I hope you have time for it. A young boy, 3 years old, was with his father. They were picking up some books for their mother, he was studying to be a priest.

And the little boy comes in, and in this little sanctuary was a picture of the crucifix with Jesus's body on it. OK? Now, the little boy looks at that. He said, daddy, what happened? Now, that's a metaphor for me. I look at these people tortured at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and I say, what happened? What happened to the people I used to work with? After 9/11, did everything change? I'm forced to conclude that those moral values went into the, into the ash can. And that's very sorrowful for me.

The only thing I'll add is that where are the, where are the religious leaders on this key subject? I went to a Jesuit university, and I was taught about this intrinsic evil category. And I am very, very, very sad to say that somehow with the, with the honorary degree given to John Brennan, an aficionado of torture, and kidnapping, and black sites, they gave him an honorary degree, catch this, an honorary degree in humane letters, sic. OK. So the seniors graduating at the time, this is six years ago, they said, well, that's crazy. Humane letters? They went to the

president, president named Joe McShane. They said, Fr. McShane, what's going on here? And he said, and I quote: “Torture is a grey area.”

Well, you know, if torture has been let slip out of intrinsic evil into a gray area just because an alumnus of Fordham University happened to be in the White House and worked on torture and drone killings, and so forth, that's a very sad commentary on our religious leadership. And as I finished an article I wrote recently, I said, you know, I have nine grandchildren, seven of which still have to choose their college. And it pains me deeply, very deeply, to think that I can't in good conscience recommend my alma mater any of the seven remaining grandchildren.

SHARMINI PERIES: All right, Ray, with that we'll leave you for now. But we'll get another opportunity to talk about this, because Gina Haspel's confirmation isn't quite a done deal as yet. Hopefully there will be people like you and more people like you trying to effect that confirmation. So I thank you so much for joining us today.

RAY MCGOVERN: Most welcome.

SHARMINI PERIES: And thank you for joining us here on the Real News Network.