

The CIA's use of waterboarding to interrogate terrorism suspects was approved by Condoleezza Rice as early as 2002, a senate report reveals.

As national security adviser, Ms Rice consented to the harsh interrogation of al-Qaeda suspect Abu Zubaydah, the Senate Intelligence Committee found.

Memos released last week show that he and another key detainee were subjected to waterboarding 266 times.

Former Vice-President Dick Cheney has said the techniques produced results.

The latest details were revealed in a timeline of the CIA's interrogation programme produced by the US Senate Intelligence Committee.

It shows Ms Rice and other top Bush administration officials were first briefed about "alternative interrogation methods, including waterboarding", in May 2002.

BUSH-ERA INTERROGATION

- *Waterboarding*: Aimed at simulating sensation of drowning. Used on alleged 9/11 planner Khalid Sheikh Mohammed
- *Insect*: Harmless insect to be placed with suspect in 'confinement box', suspect to be told the insect would sting. Approved for Abu Zubaydah, but not used
- *Walling*: Detainee slammed repeatedly into false wall to create sound and shock
- *Sleep deprivation*: Detainee shackled standing up. Used often, once for 180 hours

The CIA is reported to have wanted to use the techniques to interrogate Abu Zubaydah, who was captured in Pakistan in March 2002.

In a meeting with the then-CIA Director George Tenet in July 2002, Ms Rice "advised that the CIA could proceed with its proposed interrogation" of Zubaydah, subject to Justice Department approval, the report says.

A year later, the CIA briefed officials including Ms Rice, Mr Cheney and Attorney General John Ashcroft on the use of waterboarding and other methods.

The officials "reaffirmed that the CIA programme was lawful and reflected administration policy", the Senate report says.

CIA memos released by President Barack Obama's administration last week revealed that Zubaydah was waterboarded at least 83 times and self-confessed 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammad 183 times.

Other interrogation methods mentioned in the memos include week-long sleep deprivation, forced nudity and the use of painful positions.

Former Vice-President Dick Cheney has called for the release of additional documents that he said would show what the techniques yielded.

Earlier this week, President Obama left open the possibility of prosecuting officials behind the CIA's harsh interrogation techniques, saying it would be up to the attorney general to prosecute.

He had been criticised by human rights groups and UN officials after saying, when the memos were released, that CIA personnel working from Bush administration legal opinions would not face prosecution.

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