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*A military base in Stare Kiejkuty, Poland, which was a suspected location for the C.I.A.'s detentions and interrogations. Credit Tomasz Waszcuk/European Pressphoto Agency*

WASHINGTON — Just after the Senate Intelligence Committee voted in April to [declassify hundreds of pages of a withering report](#)

on the

[Central Intelligence Agency](#)

's detention and interrogation program, C.I.A. Director John O. Brennan convened a meeting of the men who had played a role overseeing the program in its seven-year history.

The spies, past and present, faced each other around the long wooden conference table on the seventh floor of the C.I.A.'s headquarters in Northern Virginia: J. Cofer Black, head of the agency's counterterrorism center at the time of the Sept. 11 attacks; the undercover officer who now holds that job; and a number of other former officials from the C.I.A.'s clandestine service. Over the speakerphone came the distinctive, Queens-accented voice of George J. Tenet.

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Over the past several months, Mr. Tenet has quietly engineered a counterattack against the Senate committee's voluminous report, which could become public next month. The effort to discredit the report has set up a three-way showdown among former C.I.A. officials who believe history has been distorted, a White House carefully managing the process and politics of declassifying the document, and Senate Democrats convinced that the Obama administration is trying to protect the C.I.A. at all costs.

The report is expected to accuse a number of former C.I.A. officials of misleading Congress and the White House about the program and its effectiveness, but it is Mr. Tenet who might have the most at stake.

The detention and interrogation program was conceived on his watch and run by men and women he had put in senior positions. After virtually disappearing from public view since leaving the C.I.A. in 2004 except for a brief period promoting his memoir, Mr. Tenet is working behind the scenes with many of the same people to develop a strategy to challenge the report's findings. And he is relying on his close relationship with Mr. Brennan to keep him apprised as the report moves through a glacial declassification process. Mr. Brennan rose to the C.I.A.'s senior ranks during Mr. Tenet's tenure, and served as one of the former C.I.A. chief's most trusted advisers during the post-9/11 period.

Mr. Tenet, who declined to be interviewed for this article, has arranged a number of conference calls with former C.I.A. officials to discuss the impending report. After private conversations with Mr. Brennan, he and two other former C.I.A. directors — Porter J. Goss and Michael V. Hayden — drafted a letter to Mr. Brennan asking that, as a matter of fairness, they be allowed to see the report before it was made public. Describing the letter, one former C.I.A. officer who spoke on condition of anonymity said that the former directors "think that those people who were heavily involved in the operations have a right to see what's being said about them."

Mr. Brennan then passed the letter to Senator Dianne Feinstein, the California Democrat who

is chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Ms. Feinstein agreed to let a group of former senior C.I.A. officials read a draft of the report, although she initially insisted they be allowed to review it only at the committee's office. Officials said President Obama's chief of staff, Denis McDonough, intervened and brokered an arrangement in which the officials could read an unredacted version of the report inside a secure room at the office of the Director of National Intelligence. Ms. Feinstein declined to comment.

The White House has been working closely with intelligence agencies to redact the document before it is returned to the Intelligence Committee, providing fuel to critics that Mr. Obama was giving license to the C.I.A. to vet a report that accuses the agency of a raft of misdeeds. The president has said little publicly about the report, other than that he would like it to be made public as soon as possible.

But some Senate Democrats are seething about how long it has taken to declassify the document, what they see as Mr. Obama's inattention to the process, and the role played by Mr. McDonough, who is personally coordinating the redaction of the document and has a close relationship with Mr. Brennan, who served in the White House as Mr. Obama's counterterrorism adviser during the president's first term.

Senator Ron Wyden, the Oregon Democrat who is a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said "in my view this report should have been public yesterday, and attempts to disrupt and delay it are unacceptable."

There is also residual anger at Mr. Brennan within the committee for [authorizing the C.I.A. to search the computers of committee staff members](#) working on the report late last year. The C.I.A. carried out the search after security officials came to think the committee staff may have improperly gained access to the spy agency's computer systems.

"While former C.I.A. officials may be working to hide their own past wrongs, there's no reason Brennan or any other current C.I.A. official should help facilitate the defense of the indefensible," said [Christopher Anders](#), senior legislative counsel at the American Civil

Liberties Union.

Spokesmen for the C.I.A. and the White House declined to comment.

The April meeting at C.I.A. headquarters highlighted how much of the agency is still seeded with officers who participated in the detention and interrogation program, which Mr. Obama officially ended during his first week in office in 2009.

At one point during the meeting, the current head of the counterterrorism center, an officer with the first name Mike, told Mr. Brennan that roughly 200 people under his leadership had at some point participated in the interrogation program. They wanted to know, he said, how Mr. Brennan planned to defend them in public against accusations that the C.I.A. engaged in systematic torture and lied about its efficacy.

Mr. Tenet flashed his anger at these accusations in 2007, when he was asked about the interrogation program during an interview with the CBS program "60 Minutes."

Wagging a finger at the correspondent, Scott Pelley, Mr. Tenet said over and over, "We don't torture people."

"No, listen to me. No, listen to me. I want you to listen to me," he went on. "Everybody forgets one central context of what we lived through: The palpable fear that we felt on the basis of that fact that there was so much we did not know. I know that this program has saved lives. I know we've disrupted plots."

The Senate Intelligence Committee's report is expected to directly challenge this contention. Several people who have read the report said that it concludes that the C.I.A.'s interrogation methods broke up no terrorist plots and that agency officials repeatedly inflated the value of the program.

Mr. Tenet resigned a decade ago amid the wash of recriminations over the C.I.A.'s botched Iraq assessments, and he has given few interviews since his book tour.

But he remains bound to the spy agency he once led, raising money for the C.I.A. Officers Memorial Foundation, which gives scholarship money to children of C.I.A. officers killed in the line of duty. He has also advised companies that do business with military and intelligence agencies, including Palantir Technologies, a California-based data analysis company that has won lucrative government contracts.

He maintains his friendship with Mr. Brennan, whose C.I.A. career flourished during the Tenet era. Despite being an analyst, rather than a clandestine case officer, Mr. Brennan in the late 1990s was given the prestigious position of C.I.A. station chief in Saudi Arabia.

He returned from Riyadh to become Mr. Tenet's chief of staff, and later moved up to become the C.I.A.'s deputy executive director.