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Nearly 15 years after the United States adopted a program to interrogate terrorism suspects using techniques now widely considered to be torture, no one involved in helping craft it has been held legally accountable.

Even as President Obama acknowledged that the United States “tortured some folks,” his administration declined to prosecute any government officials. But now, one lawsuit has gone further than any other in American courts to fix blame. The suit, filed in October 2015 in Federal District Court in Spokane, Wash., by two former detainees in C.I.A. secret prisons and the representative of a third who died in custody, centers on two contractors, psychologists who were hired by the agency to help devise and run the program.

One of them, James E. Mitchell, has written a book to be released Tuesday about his involvement in the program. In the book, he argues that he acted with government permission and that he and Bruce Jessen, the other psychologist and his co-defendant in the lawsuit, received medals from the C.I.A.

Legal experts say the incoming administration of Donald J. Trump could force the case’s dismissal on national security grounds. Deciding whether to invoke the so-called state secrets privilege over evidence requested in the lawsuit could represent the new president’s first chance to weigh in on the issue of torture. Mr. Trump has endorsed the effectiveness of torture and said he would bring back waterboarding, though it is not clear now that he intends to do so.

Lawyers for Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Jessen have clashed with the Justice Department over what classified evidence is needed to defend against the suit’s allegations that the men “designed, implemented, and personally administered an experimental torture program.” Last month, despite United States government opposition, the court approved the defendants’ request for oral depositions of John Rizzo, a former C.I.A. acting general counsel, and José Rodriguez, the former chief of the agency’s clandestine spy service who also headed the C.I.A.’s Counterterrorism Center.

Dr. Mitchell was first publicly identified as one of the architects of the C.I.A.'s "enhanced interrogation" program nearly a decade ago, and has given some news media interviews, but is now providing a more detailed account of his involvement. His book, "Enhanced Interrogation: Inside the Minds and Motives of the Islamic Terrorists Trying to Destroy America" (Crown Forum), was written with Bill Harlow, a former C.I.A. spokesman. It was reviewed by the agency before release. (The New York Times obtained a copy of the book before its publication date.) In the book, Dr. Mitchell alleges that harsh interrogation techniques he devised and carried out, based on those he used as an Air Force trainer in survival schools to prepare airmen if they became prisoners of war, protected the detainees from even worse abuse by the C.I.A. Dr. Mitchell wrote that he and Dr. Jessen sequestered prisoners in closed boxes, forced them to hold painful positions for hours and prevented them from sleeping for days. He also takes credit for suggesting and implementing waterboarding — covering a detainee's face with a cloth and pouring water over it to simulate the sensation of drowning — among other now-banned techniques. "Although they were unpleasant, their use protected detainees from being subjected to unproven and perhaps harsher techniques made up on the fly that could have been much worse," he wrote. C.I.A. officers, he added, "had already decided to get rough."

Mr. Obama declined to open a broad inquiry into the treatment of terrorism suspects, saying as president-elect that the nation needed to "look forward." He did not rule out prosecuting those who went beyond techniques authorized by the Justice Department, but no one has been charged with those offenses under his watch. During the George W. Bush administration, a C.I.A. contractor was convicted in the death of an Afghan detainee at an American military base in Afghanistan.

Henry F. Schuelke, a Washington lawyer with the firm Blank Rome, who represents Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Jessen, said that he believed his clients "were left holding the bag" while C.I.A. officials involved in the program have been protected from the lawsuit. "The government and its officers, namely many of the C.I.A. officers, enjoy sovereign immunity," Mr. Schuelke said in an interview.

