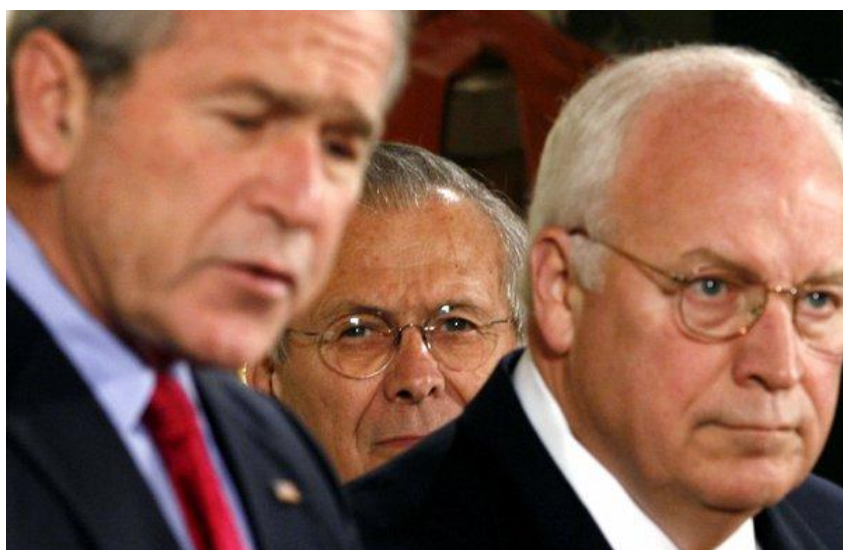


By Debra Sweet

This is not a film review. But see ["Vice,"](#) starring Christian Bale as "Dick" Cheney. You'll look at this photo differently after seeing the film.



One of the remarkable features of the film is the startling, realistic jumps to the violence of the U.S. war on terror precipitated by Cheney's actions. Cheney co-ordinates the build-up to the attack on Iraq and suddenly the screen is filled with Iraqis being bombed. Cheney authorizes the rendering of a cleric in one of the Baltic states, and bam, the cleric is thrown into a van within seconds, gagged and disappeared. The concepts of human rights and democracy, U.S. style, get brought sharply to the viewer, as a public service.

Brad Pitt and others behind the film show Cheney and his relentless grabbing of power for the "unitary executive," including the role of John Yoo writing the torture memo of 2002, which opened the official way for waterboarding, sleep deprivation and other methods. This history is not to be contrasted with the current regime; in effect, everything done by Cheney set the stage for Trump to both throw around threats of sending more people to Guantanamo and advocate the increased use of torture, threaten the use of nukes, and "close the border."

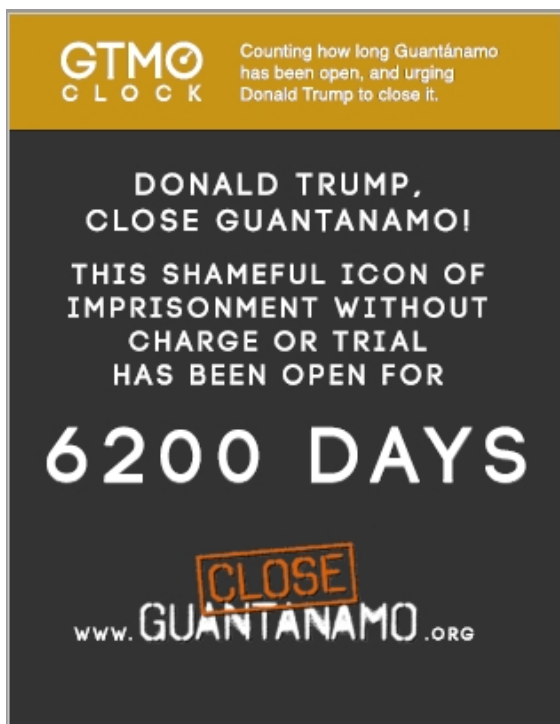
Fast forward to last week when Mark Theissen, who wrote speeches for W., suggested in [The Washington Post](#) that if Trump needs a place to detain ISIS fighters from Syria, he should move them to Guantanamo. Trump's Cheneyesque [2018 Executive Order](#)

lays plans to “transport additional detainees to U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay when lawful and necessary to protect the Nation.”

In last year's State of the Union, Trump said, “to ensure that, in the fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda, we continue to have all the necessary power to detain terrorists -- wherever we chase them down, wherever we find them. And in many cases for them it will now be Guantanamo Bay.” Congress went along by approving \$200M in new construction funding for GTMO and the Pentagon announced plans for captured fighters who pose a "continuing, significant threat" to be transferred.

The actions of the war criminals who proceeded the Trump/Pence regime -- and the utterly conscious refusal to prosecute those crimes, laid the basis for new horrors.

Andy Worthington, who will be in the U.S. next week for the (17th!) anniversary of the opening of Guantanamo, reflected on the Senate Report on Torture (see ["The Forgotten Torture Report: It's Ten Years Since the Publication of the Senate Armed Services Committee's Pioneering 'Inquiry into the Treatment of Detainees in US Custody'"](#)) released ten years ago and buried. “Having established the President’s role as the initial facilitator of abuse, the report implicates those directly responsible for implementing the torture of prisoners, explaining how Haynes began soliciting advice from the agency responsible for SERE techniques in December 2001, and how Addington, Justice Department legal adviser John Yoo and White House counsel Alberto Gonzales attempted to redefine torture in the notorious ‘Torture Memo’ of August 2002, which claimed that the pain endured ‘must be equivalent to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death.’”



The authors also noted how Donald Rumsfeld 'approved the use of SERE techniques at Guantanamo in December 2002 (after Haynes had consulted with other senior officials), and explain how the techniques migrated to Afghanistan in January 2003, and were implemented in Iraq by Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the commander of coalition forces, in September 2003."

Andy Worthington then reflected, "The report is not without its faults. The authors carefully refrain from ever using the words 'torture' or 'war crimes,' which is a considerable semantic achievement, but one that does little to foster a belief that the officials involved will one day be held accountable for their crimes. They also, curiously, omit all mention of Vice President Dick Cheney, and ignore the importance of the presidential order of November 2001, which authorized the capture and indefinite detention of 'enemy combatants' and established the Military Commission trial system, even though the Washington Post's Barton Gellman has established that Cheney played a significant role in this and all the other crucial documents that led to the torture and abuse of detainees."