

From MorningStaronline.co.uk | Original Article

Britain's biggest arms firm has just put a top George Bush official who was deeply implicated in the Republicans' torture policies onto its board.

BAE hired Michael Chertoff, formerly the US secretary of homeland security, at the end of last week.

The appointment of one of Bush Jr's crazy gang to the BAE board was ignored by the British press, but US reporters are shocked such about a high official joining a company that recently had to promise the US government not to bribe any more high officials.

BAE also had to pay \$447 million to settle charges about bribing the Saudis. The US press thinks that BAE promising not to bribe government officials while giving jobs to government officials looks a bit tacky.

But when it comes to the unseemly, BAE and Chertoff seem a perfect match.

Chertoff was the head of the criminal division of the US Justice Department from 2001 to 2003. He was promoted to head of homeland security in January 2005.

It was in the former job that Chertoff first covered up torture. And then helped to spread it.

Chertoff worked hard to hide the abusive interrogation of John Walker Lindh, the "American Taliban."

Lindh was a Catholic boy from Washington DC who converted to Islam and went to join the Afghan Taliban in May 2001.

He was captured by the US-friendly warlords of the Afghan Northern Alliance in 2001 and was interrogated by a CIA officer.

Lindh then joined a prison uprising as foreign fighters held by the Northern Alliance tried to break free from their Afghan fort prison.

Hundreds were killed when the uprising was brutally put down. Lindh's CIA interrogator also died in the fighting.

Lindh was shot in the leg, recaptured and transferred to the prison at a US base called "Camp Rhino."

He was shipped to the US and hit with 10 charges, including "conspiracy to murder," supporting terrorism and supporting al-Qaida.

He faced 90 years in prison. The evidence against him was stronger than many of those unfortunates stuck in Guantanamo.

Then something strange happened. Lindh pleaded guilty to lesser charges of carrying a rifle for the Taliban. This ended the trial before any real evidence was heard and got Lindh a 20-year sentence. This was mild by US standards.

Why? Because Chertoff arranged a plea-bargain with Lindh.

Chertoff pushed the deal to stop details of Lindh's abuse being discussed in court. Lindh was

questioned while strapped naked to a stretcher inside an unheated cargo container with an untreated bullet wound in his leg.

Lindh says guards kept him awake at night by hammering on the container. His confession was given before the bullet was removed.

Chertoff brought the strange and mysterious end to Lindh's trial with a deal that hid the strange and shocking treatment of the captive.

Had Lindh's abuse been exposed in 2002, there was a chance the US would have turned away from torture more quickly. Instead, Chertoff helped to spread the practice.

The Bush White House asked the Justice Department to legally OK "coercive" interrogation methods.

Under Chertoff's leadership, junior justice officials wrote bizarre, grotesque memos suggesting, for example, that interrogations causing anything short of the pain of organ failure were OK as long as the president said so.

Records show Chertoff was a bit queasy about some of these suggestions. He refused to give a blank cheque to the CIA. He would not offer them immunity from prosecution if interrogations got out of hand.

The New York Times also said Chertoff ruled out a few interrogation methods such as using death threats against family members and mind-altering drugs that would change a detainee's personality.

But The Times says Chertoff did approve waterboarding for interrogations. So after covering up torture in Lindh's case, Chertoff helped authorise it, reluctantly.

A Justice Department ethics panel later very mildly slapped Chertoff's wrist, saying he "should have looked beyond the surface complexity" of the torture memos written by his underlings and checked if they really were "sound."

But never mind, Chertoff is respectable enough for a job on the BAE board.

You can get a sense of Chertoff's views from his address to the right-wing US Heritage Foundation at a meeting called to discuss the TV show 24.

In the "Ronald Reagan Building" in Washington DC, in front of the cast and writers of 24, Chertoff said of the torture-happy adventure show, "frankly, it reflects real life."

Chertoff was clearly delighted by the way 24 portrays investigators as macho men who are just forced to abuse suspects to save lives.

Chertoff claims 24 accurately showed justice officials had "choices about whether to take drastic and even violent action against a threat, and weighing that against the consequence of not taking the action and the destruction that might otherwise ensue."

BAE wants Chertoff because, as the firm said, he "is uniquely well positioned to support the company as it continues to grow in the global security market."

It thinks that "his years of experience in the security domain will be of tremendous value to our businesses as we help our government and private-sector customers develop cyber-security solutions, combat terrorism and organised crime and strengthen border and transportation security."

That is, it wants Chertoff to win those war on terror contracts, running spying and immigration

databases, surveillance systems and so on.

BAE relies heavily on British government support. So our tax money will pay to help Bush's pal Chertoff to spy on us.

BAE is at the very centre of British politics - Speaker John Bercow recently admitted he had hired a BAE subsidiary called Detica to try and flush out who leaked the MPs' expenses details.

The Home Office is preparing a report proposing BAE and other firms will help with "social profiling" to catch "terrorists." And now it can do this with the help of a man who helped Bush to abuse prisoners.