

From [Democracy Now](#) | Original Article

Trump has tapped CIA Deputy Director Gina Haspel to replace outgoing CIA Director Mike Pompeo, after Pompeo was named to succeed Rex Tillerson as secretary of state. Haspel was directly involved in the CIA's torture program under George W. Bush. She was responsible for running a secret

IA  
black site in Thailand in 2002 where one prisoner was waterboarded 83 times and tortured in other ways. But she enjoys broad support, including from the intelligence community and Democrats in the Senate. For more, we speak with Jeremy Scahill, co-founder of The Intercept.

**AMY GOODMAN:** I want to turn to former CIA Clandestine Service chief Jose Rodriguez speaking to CBS News in 2014. Rodriguez defended the CIA's so-called enhanced interrogation techniques.

**JOSE RODRIGUEZ:** It was necessary. And let me give you a little history lesson on this. At the time of 9/11, we had general information that an attack was coming. But we didn't know when, where, how. And the reason was, was because the informants, the agents that we had, were on the periphery of the leadership. So we really did not have any inside information. Once we captured Abu Zubaydah and realized that he was the key to letting us know about the incoming—the upcoming second wave of attacks, we decided to go with the enhanced interrogation program. And once that happened, we started to learn about the—about the organization. We got information that added to our base information. We were able to capture and kill the entire al-Qaeda leadership that attacked us on 9/11. We were able to protect the homeland. We were able to save lives.

**AMY GOODMAN:** That was Jose Rodriguez from 2014 on CBS. I wanted to get Jeremy Scahill to respond, co-founder of *The Intercept*, host of the weekly podcast *Intercepted*, author of the books *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* and *Dirty Wars: The World Is a Battlefield*

, as well as the Oscar-nominated film

*Dirty Wars*

, and a former

*Democracy Now!*

producer. Jeremy, your response to both what Rodriguez said and also the possible

appointment of Gina Haspel to head the

CIA

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Well, first of all, I mean, Jose Rodriguez is the guy who wrote in his memoir, which was called *Hard Measures*—sounded like it was like a porn movie or something—that when they decided to start torturing people around the world, that it was the CIA and the Washington establishment putting on their, quote, “big boy pants,” is how he referred to it, just to give you a sense of the kind of infantile mentality that some of the people that John Kiriakou was describing had.

And I think that there is substantial evidence to suggest that some of the people involved with this program—I don’t know directly about Gina Haspel, but others—seemed to really enjoy torturing people, placing them in boxes, exploiting their fears by using psychologists and other mental health professionals to come in and say, “What are they actually really afraid of? What’s their deepest, darkest fears?” and then exploiting those. So, if someone was afraid of spiders, they would put them inside of a box, that they referred to as a coffin, and then they would put a caterpillar inside of the box and tell the person that it was a tarantula that was in the box with them. They did something called walling, where they would have a rope that was on the other side of a wall, and they would, out of nowhere, just slam a prisoner and yank him on a kind of jerk chain, or like he was a dog on a leash, against the wall. And then you had the kinds of extreme torture that Gina Haspel was involved with. And both Jose Rodriguez and Gina Haspel, in addition to being involved with the outright torture of people, both of them were involved with the destruction of videotapes that were filmed at these black sites that showed, we understand, torture.

And what I think is also important for people to realize right now, Gina Haspel is not considered some extremist in the CIA community. In fact, President Obama’s director of central intelligence, John Brennan, was on MSNBC all throughout the day yesterday singing her praises. In fact, at one point, an MSNBC

anchor asked John Brennan—or said to John Brennan, “Now, you demoted her when you were at the CIA

.” And he goes, “No, no, no, no, no. I didn’t demote her. In fact, she’s wonderful and has all this integrity. And she was tasked with very difficult operations, you know, and persevered and did it with gusto.” And, you know, then you have James Clapper, same thing. It was a lovefest on the so-called like opposition media yesterday throughout the day. And

MSNBC

actually created a—they had a graphic up that was describing Gina Haspel’s track record. And they said that she was involved with sending terror suspects to put them in the hands of foreign governments to be tortured, but they described what she did in Thailand as, quote-unquote, “rough interrogation.” Now, already it’s an abomination that anyone refers to this as “enhanced interrogation,” but, out of nowhere,

MSNBC

starts referring to torture by the

CIA

as “rough interrogation.”

So, we now have someone who is nominated to be the CIA director. It will be interesting to see what happens at that confirmation hearing. One possibility here—my colleague Matthew Cole and I were discussing this yesterday—is that Trump knows that she’s going to have a very difficult time being confirmed as CIA director. Now, maybe that’s not true. It will take a lot of Democrats. You know, Dianne Feinstein has already come out and sung the praises of Gina Haspel. But Trump is sort of portraying this as she’s going to break the glass ceiling and become the first female

CIA

director—of course, they choose a woman who, as

*The Onion*

put it, you know, had to torture many more people than her male colleagues to prove herself—but that part of the idea might be to force the Democrats to try to stop the appointment of the first female

CIA

director in an effort to get Senator Tom Cotton, who has been dying to be

CIA

director—and I think that a lot of neocons want him there, very hawkish on Iran, etc.—to sort of pave the way for Tom Cotton to take control of the

CIA

.

And the final point that I’ll make on this micro part of the discussion is that, you know, with the exception of people like John Kiriakou and others who were whistleblowers and who found themselves in the crosshairs of the national security establishment in this country, there really is no such thing as former CIA. And I think it’s very telling that, across the board, when you hear all these pundits, who were former senior CIA, DNI, FBI, naval intelligence analysts, they’re all on the same page—Ned Price, who was the spokesperson for

the CIA  
under Obama, just heaping praise on Gina Haspel all throughout the day. Nothing will fundamentally change in this country with torture, with war crimes, unless we hold those who did the torture accountable.

Gina Haspel does not belong as head of the CIA. She belongs in front of a judge, answering to what she was doing, running a torture operation at a black site in Thailand and destroying evidence. And then, John Brennan, Obama's CIA director—while the Senate was investigating the torture that Gina Haspel was a key player in, John Brennan's CIA starts spying on the United States Senate. This is the investigators who were investigating the very torture that Gina Haspel was directly involved with. It was Obama's CIA director who was spying on the Senate.

**AMY GOODMAN:** How?

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** The Senate investigators were given access to close net computers so that they could review documents. And, of course, the CIA wanted no pages released. What ended up happening is the Senate released a several hundred-page executive summary of a report that was—that is still not public, that was thousands and thousands of pages. So, Brennan and others at the CIA were concerned about this investigation, and they began monitoring what the Senate investigators were looking into.

So, you know, this isn't just like, "Oh, we have Mr. out-of-control Putin asset Donald Trump putting this horrid torturer in power." No, no, no, no, no. The hashtag #resistance, in terms of former intelligence people that are on the liberal networks, they love Gina Haspel. They absolutely love her. And no one's saying word boo about the fact that John Brennan was the one who was heading the CIA when the CIA was spying on the United States Senate committee that's tasked with overseeing the Central Intelligence Agency.

**AMY GOODMAN:** So, I want to go to something Dexter Filkins wrote in *The New Yorker*.

Actually, it was  
[Raymond Bonner](#)

, in [

*ProPublica*

], about questions beginning to swirl about the Bush administration's use of black sites and the program of enhanced—so-called enhanced interrogation.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** It's "rough interrogation" now, Amy.

**AMY GOODMAN:** "[Haspel] began pushing to have the tapes destroyed. She accomplished her mission years later when she rose to a senior position at CIA headquarters and drafted an order to destroy the evidence, which was still locked in a CIA safe at the American embassy in Thailand. Her boss, the head of the agency's counterterrorism center, signed the order to feed the 92 tapes into a giant shredder."

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Right. I mean, you know, and another way of putting that: If you and I were involved with a crime and we did that, it's destruction of evidence. And clearly, there was a systematic effort to—at first, to defend the torture tactics, and then, later, to say, "Well, let's remove any evidence that we did this to terror suspects." And let's remember Guantánamo is still open. Donald Trump has intimated that he wants to put more people there. The vast majority of people that were taken to Guantánamo were cleared for release.

And part of the reason that maybe even some people that were involved with terrorism are not ultimately going to be held accountable is because of people like Gina Haspel. So, if you're an American and you were horrified, shocked, angered by what happened on 9/11, and you want people that were involved with terrorism plots against the United States, including successful ones, to be held accountable, Gina Haspel is one of the people that you should be furious with, because it was the torture that she and her colleagues were running at these black sites that has resulted in some people being able to walk away, and the fact that they were held in this lawless gulag in Guantánamo rather than treated as criminals and given due process and a trial.

**AMY GOODMAN:** We're going to break and then come back to this discussion with *The Intercept*'s Jeremy Scahill, who will be joined by his colleague Lee Fang, and also longtime

CIA

officer John Kiriakou, who worked at the time in the

CIA

with Gina Haspel, who's now being considered to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Stay with us.