

By Adam Marletta From [The Maine Campus](#) | Original Article

Earlier this month, Attorney General Eric Holder launched a preliminary investigation into CIA officials who may have engaged in torture or other heinous forms of “enhanced interrogation techniques” under the Bush administration.

While many progressives, such as myself, believe this urgent investigation into un-Constitutional abuses of power is long overdue, there is growing concern Holder’s “torture probe” may be too narrow in scope to amount to anything.

Of particular concern is the announcement Holder’s investigation will focus exclusively on low-level CIA interrogators. This ignores administration lawyers and officials who authorized the use of torture in the first place, including Dick Cheney and George W. Bush, both of whom have eagerly confessed to allowing torture on national television within the last year.

In Sept. 14 edition of *The Nation*, John Nichols effectively sums up the problem posed by such a narrow investigation: “There is nothing Dick Cheney and his allies in Congress and the conservative media would prefer more than a narrowly defined investigation of low-level CIA operatives. The right knows how to make ‘heroes’ of those who dutifully carry out orders — even lawless and inhumane ones.” Nichols goes on to note the support of Rep. Jan Schakowsky and Sen. Russ Feingold who concur that “a proper investigation must target those who initiated and authorized wrongdoing.”

Yet, Schakowsky and Feingold find themselves sadly alone in the Congress on this issue. Indeed, many like-minded liberal friends and colleagues I talk with prefer to do as President Obama suggests and “look forward, rather than backward” on the issue of torture.

This is a grave mistake. Torture is a crime against humanity and a direct violation of the Geneva Conventions, to which the United States remains a signatory. Holder himself, during his confirmation hearing earlier this year, admitted torture is a crime. Without criminal accountability, not only for individuals who carried out acts of torture but for those who initially ordered such tactics, our country will never “move forward.” Quite the opposite: without accountability, such crimes are almost guaranteed to resurface — perhaps not under President Obama, but maybe later, during the next Republican administration.

David Swanson, co-founder of the activist-blog site afterdowningstreet.org and author of the new book "Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union" said, "When we elected Jimmy Carter we saw policy changes, but our failure to prosecute President Nixon helped produce the Bush-Cheney catastrophe. Accountability is not about looking backward. It's about looking forward."

There are those who believe torture is necessary or even effective in combating terrorism. Yet study after study has shown torture to be completely ineffective in producing valid information from detainees. Note that it took interrogators 183 attempts at the waterboard to get any information out of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, most of which was later discredited. I cringe every time the mainstream media addresses the "issue" of torture, presenting it as a two-sided "debate" no different than abortion or healthcare reform.

Am I the only citizen who is utterly disgusted by this? There should be no debate on torture. It is deranged, vile, immoral and inhumane in every respect. Investigating and, if necessary, prosecuting individuals like Judge Jay Bybee, former Justice Department official John Yoo, former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, Dick Cheney and George W. Bush is not about getting even or relishing in some partisan, revenge-driven witch-hunt. It is about protecting the Constitution and enforcing the rule of law. Recall a president was nearly impeached for significantly lesser offenses.

Holder is on the right track with his preliminary investigation and he should be applauded for going against President Obama's wishes by pursuing the case. Now he must expand the scope of his investigation to ensure full justice is delivered.

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