

# JOHN RIZZO

## Confessions of a War Criminal

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When the U.S. government wishes to do things immoral or in clear contravention of international law or the U.S. Constitution, it provides itself with a legal rationale along with the necessary administrative apparatus.

Between 2001 and 2009 John Rizzo fulfilled this need with respect to torture and lethal drone strikes across the Middle East. He signed off on who was to be tortured and who killed by drone. This role was clearly played with a certain bravado: “How many law professors have signed off on a death warrant?” he said after retirement.

In 2007, when nominated for the position of General Counsel to the CIA, he testified before a Senate Committee that he did not object to an administration memo in 2002 that deemed legal some extremely harsh interrogation techniques for CIA detainees. According to the memo, a technique was not considered to be torture unless it inflicted pain “equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of body function, or even death.” Rizzo testified that the legal opinion “on the whole was a reasonable one.”

Rizzo participated with John Brennan in the selection of victims and development of claims of “legality” of the U.S. drone program. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism reported on Jan. 23, 2014, that “across Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, the Obama administration has launched more than 390 drone strikes in... five years... – eight times as many as were launched in the entire Bush presidency. These strikes have killed more than 2,400 people.”

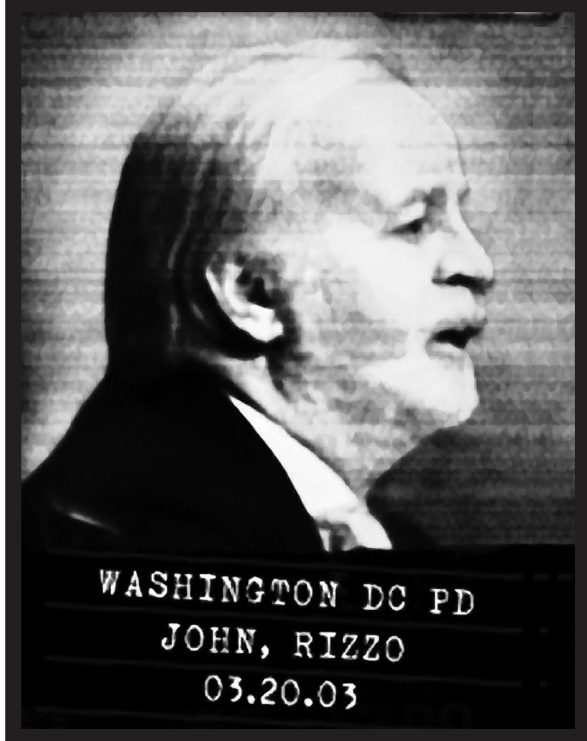
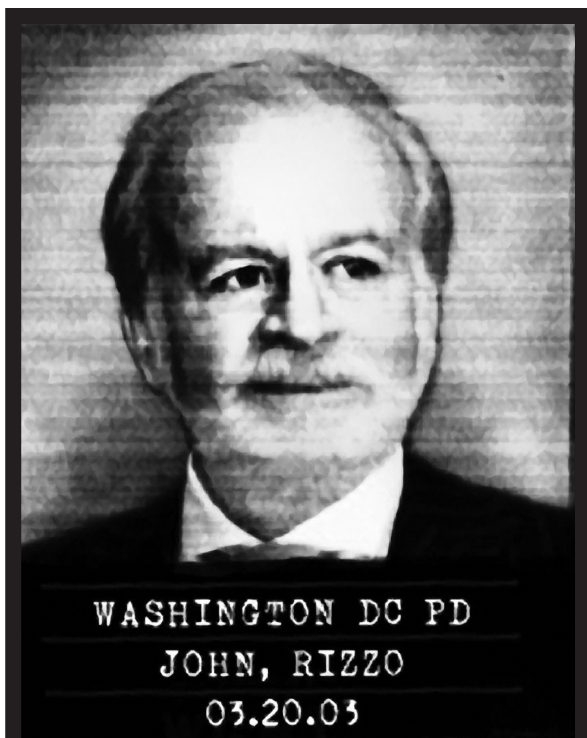
As stated in a Complaint Against John A. Rizzo to the Office of Bar Counsel, Board on Professional Responsibility in the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, Rizzo “ignored over two centuries of historical and legal precedents, fell short of the bar of the ‘good faith’ imperative, and advanced suspect legal constructs and prescriptions for detainee interrogation well outside of legal norms, thereby providing the false cover of claimed legality for those who then engaged in acts and policies that, in fact, violated the... law, both in letter and spirit.”

In this post-modern era where “everyone is entitled to his or her opinion,” it can appear that torture can be the topic of “respectful debate.” However, torture is not a subject in the abstract. Horrendous deeds have been carried out in our names, after being approved by specific individuals. What is the role of academic institutions in presenting such individuals as faculty or esteemed speakers?

For further information on John Rizzo and other U.S. war criminals, visit [WarCriminalsWatch.org](http://WarCriminalsWatch.org)

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**JOHN A. RIZZO**, employed by the CIA since 1976, served in CIA leadership positions, including Deputy General Counsel for Operations and Deputy Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs and being deeply involved in the Iran/Contra affair in the 1980s providing support to the Contras.

In the Bush and Obama Administrations, he served as Acting General Counsel and Senior Deputy General of the Central Intelligence Agency through July 2009. It was during this time that he illegally sanctioned the destruction of videotapes that recorded the interrogation and torture of CIA detainees held in CIA secret prisons.