

Editorial

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John Brennan, the [newly confirmed](#) chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, has been at the agency for most of 25 years. He had two counterterrorism jobs during the administration of George W. Bush. In one, he compiled intelligence reports from 20 agencies (including the C.I.A.) for Mr. Bush's morning briefing. He was President Obama's national security adviser in his first term and [an architect](#) of the Obama administration's targeted killings policy.

Yet, at his Senate confirmation hearing in February, he appeared to be one of the few people (apart from maybe Dick Cheney and some other die-hard right-wingers) who thinks there is some doubt still about whether the Bush administration tortured prisoners, hid its actions from Congress and misled everyone about whether coerced testimony provided valuable intelligence.

Mr. Brennan told the Senate Intelligence Committee that he was surprised by the findings of a 6,000-page Senate report on detention and interrogation. [Scott Shane reported in The Times on Thursday](#) that the report concludes that the interrogation of Al Qaeda detainees involving torture and abuse "was ill-conceived, sloppily managed and far less useful in obtaining intelligence than its supporters have claimed."

Mr. Brennan's response, after having one of the top C.I.A. jobs during the period when the torture agenda was at its apex (when Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was subjected to waterboarding 183 times), was: "I don't know what the facts are or what the truth is. So I really need to look at that carefully and see what C.I.A.'s response is."

In the past, Mr. Brennan said he had no role in running the torture program and expressed disapproval — in private to people he has not named. As for what went wrong, if “there were systemic failures, where there was mismanagement or inaccurate information,” he said, “I would need to get my arms around that, and that would be one of my highest priorities if I were to go to the agency.”

It's a little hard to be reassured because getting to the bottom of the Bush-era lawbreaking, mismanagement and incompetence in the interrogation and detention programs has not been a high priority for President Obama. In fact, it's been no priority at all. From the day he took office in 2009, the president refused to spend any time looking at the gigantic blunders and abuses of power under his predecessor because he didn't want a small thing like that to interfere with his other political priorities.

As a result, many, many of the details of the creation and execution of the torture of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and in C.I.A. black sites remain unknown to most members of Congress and to the public. Not only did Mr. Obama refuse to open any investigation, but his administration even gave a pass to the C.I.A. officials who destroyed videotapes of sanctioned torture.

The Senate's report may be the last hope for Americans to know the truth about what Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney authorized in the name of protecting our country — decisions that caused enormous damage to its reputation worldwide. But it remains classified, and Mr. Brennan has not said whether he would support releasing a redacted version to the public. That is the only acceptable course. The cover-up of the Bush-era lawbreaking has to stop.