

By The Editorial Board

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The world has long known that the United States government illegally detained and tortured prisoners after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and lied about it to Congress and the world. But the [summary of a report released Tuesday](#) of the Senate investigation of these operations, even after being sanitized by the Central Intelligence Agency itself, is a portrait of depravity that is hard to comprehend and even harder to stomach.

The report raises again, with renewed power, the question of why no one has ever been held accountable for these seeming crimes — not the top officials who set them in motion, the lower-level officials who committed the torture, or those who covered it up, including by destroying videotapes of the abuse and by trying to block the Senate Intelligence Committee's investigation of their acts.

At one point, the report says, the C.I.A. assured Congress that the behavior of the secret jailers and interrogators was nothing like the horrors the world saw at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. That was the closest the agency seems to have come to the truth — what happened appears to have been worse than what took place at Abu Ghraib.

