

By Jeff Kaye

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Last week, George Soros's Open Society Foundations (OSF) published an important [policy brief](#), "Confinement Conditions at a U.S. Screening Facility on Bagram Air Base." The report has been widely described in the press, as in this [article](#) by AFP:

The US military is mistreating detainees — and violating its own rules — at a secret prison in Afghanistan, a US think tank said Friday in a report.

The 16-page report by the Open Society Foundation said Afghans call the secret site "Tor Jail," or "Black Jail," and that consistent accounts from detainees refer to being kept without adequate shelter or food or other basic rights.

The independent investigation by OSF is consistent with news reports of torture and abuse at secret black sites run by JSOC in Afghanistan, including articles by the [New York Times](#) and [Washington Post](#)

. Last May,

[BBC](#)

reported that they received confirmation on the existence of the black site from a Red Cross spokesman, while Marc Ambinder of

[The Atlantic](#)

described the JOSC black site as being "manned by intelligence operatives and interrogators who work for the DIA's Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center (DCHC)... [performing] interrogations for a sub-unit of Task Force 714, an elite counter-terrorism brigade." The spate of news articles led

[Physicians for Human Rights](#)

to opine last May whether it was "possible that officials were relying on Appendix M of the 2006 Army Field Manual on Human Intelligence Collector Operations (AFM)," noting that the

"appendix authorizes the use of two of the tactics — sleep deprivation and isolation — allegedly being applied to detainees."

In an [article](#) for The Seminal, also posted last May, I noted that the Chief for Research for the DCHC's Behavioral Science Program, psychologist Susan Brandon, was a primary organizer of a CIA/American Psychological Association/Rand Corporation workshop on "deception" in July 2003. This workshop asked questions about how to use sensory overload techniques and truth drugs to "overwhelm the senses" of prisoners, in order to detect deception. [Scott](#)

[Horton](#)

also picked up the connection between Brandon and the torture reports from Afghanistan. In a major investigative report at

[Truthout](#)

last week, Jason Leopold and I reported that changes in a DOD directive on human subjects experimentation protections signed by Paul Wolfowitz in March 2002 were implicated in "a top-secret Special Access Program at the Guantanamo Bay prison, which experimented on ways to glean information from unwilling subjects and to achieve 'deception detection.'"

There is most likely much more to the detention story in Afghanistan than we know thus far, but the new OSF report is a welcome corroboration of most unwelcome and brutal facts about U.S. prisoner abuse and counterinsurgency practice in Afghanistan. But whether it's AFP, [AP](#), [Reuters](#) ,

[BBC](#)

, or even

[Aljazeera](#)

, with only one exception,

no

press article on the OSF report indicated that as one of the OSF report's "main findings" the abuse in the Bagram secret prison derives from the use of the Army Field Manual's Appendix M. Appendix M is a portion of AFM dealing with prisoners who are held in other than Prisoner of War status. Appendix M techniques, concentrating on isolation, sleep and sensory deprivation, use of fear techniques, and ambiguous "prohibitions" on "extreme" environmental manipulations, amount to torture and/or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and they are in use

[today](#)

. Only my fellow psychologist and anti-torture activist, Stephen Soldz,

[noted](#)

this most salient finding of the OSF investigation.

A link to the Army Field Manual, with its Appendix M, can be downloaded in PDF format [here](#) .

Jonathan Horowitz, author of the OSF report ([PDF](#)), described how he determined the use of Appendix M techniques:

The interviewees consistently described being held in a location where they were interrogated and held in small single person cells that prohibited verbal and visual communication with other detainees. This strongly suggests that the detainees were “screened” and subjected to interrogation methods described in Appendix M of the U.S. Army’s *Human Intelligence Collector Operations Field Manual 2-22.3*, which allows detaining authorities to physically separate detainees from other detainees and the outside world for the purposes of intelligence gathering—a technique known as “separation.”

Horowitz’s mention of Appendix M is not incidental. It is mentioned on fifteen different occasions in the text of the report’s 16 pages. OSF is very specific about its concerns regarding the current Army Field Manual on interrogation:

Despite the government’s insistence that Appendix M meets the minimum requirements for the protection of detainees under international law, analysts from the Open Society Foundations have expressed concerns with *Field Manual 2-22.3* prior to this research, especially with regard to its authorization of sleep deprivation, refusing to classify stress positions as torture, and the deletion of key policy statements that, prior to the 2006 update of the manual, had informed interrogators that “[e]xperience shows that the use of prohibited techniques is not necessary to gain the cooperation of interrogation sources.”¹⁴ As this report demonstrates, additional concerns with the *Field Manual 2-22.3* are warranted....

Field Manual 2-22.3 states, “[w]hile using legitimate interrogation techniques, certain applications of approaches and techniques may approach the line between permissible actions and prohibited actions. It may often be difficult to determine where permissible actions end and prohibited actions begin.”

The report notes that the totality of conditions and interrogation abuses at the Tor (or “Black”) prison at Bagram call into question whether fair assessment of enemy status can be made by

the new-fangled Detainee Review Boards, meaning God knows how many innocent people are being picked up and held as prisoners, awaiting the day that a viable Afghan court system can supposedly try these "insurgents".

The Detainee Review Boards taking place at the DFIP [Detention Facility in Parwan] prohibit the submission of information and evidence obtained through the use of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. If detainees are being held in conditions at an interrogation facility that rises to this level of abuse, the information obtained from those detainees should be rejected by the Detainee Review Boards.

I have been [writing](#) on the serious, indeed criminal, problems with the Army Field Manual since the new version was introduced in September 2006. I wrote a major piece on the problems with it for [AlterNet](#) in January 2009, and have followed up with reporting at Firedoglake (see [here](#) and [here](#) , for example; also [E mptywheel/Marcy Wheeler](#) and [bmaz](#)).

But this kind of exposure, and the work of others, like [Matthew Alexander](#) , [Stephen Rickard](#) , [Physicians for Human Rights](#) and [Center for Constitutional Rights](#) , among other, has not been enough to fix the centrality of the use of Appendix M torture in the general political consciousness of the population. This can be largely attributed to the massive silence by politicians on this issue, and the assurances of the Obama administration that the AFM and Appendix M are safe, legal, and humane. So when a complacent and cowardly press and blogosphere are faced with the truth of the situation emanating from an establishment source such as the Open Society Foundations, what do they do? They ignore the truth.

Such is America in 2010, lost, rudderless, obsessed with trivia, as a monstrous war/intelligence/surveillance apparatus lurches on to either conquest or disaster (or maybe both) in its overseas campaigns, oblivious to how many are killed (the U.S. claims it doesn't keep track of the killed in Afghanistan), maimed, displaced, lives destroyed and national ideals trampled.

It's time the campaign against Appendix M went mainstream.