

Psychologists Accused of Designing CIA Torture Program to Stand Trial



Seattle, August 9 (RHC)-- In the United states, two psychologists who helped design the CIA's post-9/11 detainee interrogation program will stand trial in September for promoting the use of torture methods.

Federal judges in Washington State have ordered a lawsuit on behalf of three former detainees to go to a jury trial. They rejected efforts to force a settlement and prevent a full hearing of the case, according to AFP.

The lawsuit which was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on behalf of the ex-detainees will be the first involving the torture programs like water-boarding, starvation and chaining prisoners in extreme stress positions. Previous efforts had been headed off by the government over the need to protect sensitive intelligence.

Psychologists James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen, who were recruited by the CIA in 2002 to design and help conduct interrogations of terror suspects captured in Afghanistan and elsewhere, were the case targets.

The two were paid \$80 million for their work, which included helping interrogate Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the September 11, 2001 attacks, and Abu Zubaydah, another top al-Qaeda official.

The ACLU suit alleges that Jessen and Mitchell were responsible for, and profited financially from, the illegal torture of Tanzanian Suleiman Abdullah Salim, Libyan Mohamed Ahmed Ben Soud, and Afghani Gul Rahman.

The first two were later freed after years of imprisonment, while Rahman died of hypothermia in a CIA prison cell in November 2002, after what the ACLU says was two weeks of “brutal torture.”

“This is a historic day for our clients and all who seek accountability for torture,” ACLU attorney Dror Ladin said in a statement. Ladin added: “The court's ruling means that for the first time, individuals responsible for the brutal and unlawful CIA torture program will face meaningful legal accountability for what they did. Our clients have waited a long time for justice.”

Psychologists argued that they were not responsible for all of the CIA's interrogation activities and had nothing to do with the interrogations of two of the men, yet the court rejected the arguments.

They also claimed that the decision to use such techniques was made by the CIA and approved by the Department of Justice, and that they cannot therefore be held responsible.

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