

Hosted by Google™

Search News

Former Bush officials slam release of torture memos

4 days ago

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Amid calls for torture prosecutions, former Bush administration officials Friday slammed President Barack Obama's release of terror interrogation memos, warning the move would fuel "timidity and fear" among US spies.

Unhappy with Obama's promise not to prosecute CIA officials, human rights groups have demanded criminal investigations of officials who approved or used the interrogation techniques chillingly detailed in the Justice Department memos.

But in an editorial in The Wall Street Journal, former CIA director Michael Hayden and former attorney general Michael Mukasey charged that disclosure of the memos "was unnecessary as a legal matter, and is unsound as a matter of policy."

"Its effect will be to invite the kind of institutional timidity and fear of recrimination that weakened intelligence gathering in the past, and that we came sorely to regret on September 11, 2001."

White House senior adviser David Axelrod countered that Obama's decision to release the memos written by top legal officials in George W. Bush's administration was "a weighty decision."

Obama "thought very long and hard about it, consulted widely, because there were two principles at stake," Axelrod told the Politico news website.

"One is the sanctity of covert operations and keeping faith with the people who do them, and the impact on national security, on the one hand. And the other was the law and his belief in transparency."

Obama consulted officials from the Justice Department, the CIA, the Homeland Security Department and the director of national intelligence, he said.

In releasing the four partially blacked-out memos, Obama said Thursday that the interrogation tactics, which have been widely denounced as torture, "undermine our moral authority and do not make us safer."

But he also pledged not to prosecute operatives who carried out the interrogations because they acted with the approval of the Justice Department and were defending their country.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which brought the lawsuit that forced the release of the memos, said Obama's position against prosecutions was "untenable."

"There can be no more excuses for putting off criminal investigations of officials who authorized torture, lawyers who justified it and interrogators who broke the law," said Anthony Romero, the ACLU's executive director.

The Center for Constitutional Rights noted that it has tried to bring criminal cases in Europe against former defense secretary Robert Gates, former CIA director George Tenet, and former Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez.

Hayden and Mukasey, who both served during Bush's second term, said the release "assures that terrorists are now aware of the absolute limit of what the US government could do to extract information from them, and can supplement their training accordingly and thus diminish the effectiveness of these techniques."

They also argued that the disclosure meant that Obama was making permanent the suspension of the interrogation techniques.

"By allowing this disclosure, President Obama has tied not only his own hands but also the hands of any future administration faced with the prospect of attack," Hayden and Mukasey wrote.

The former officials defended the use of the techniques, noting that some detainees, including top Al-Qaeda detainee Abu Zubaydah, had voluntarily disclosed information after being submitted to CIA interrogations.

The memos were authored by Jay Bybee and Steven Bradbury, who at the time were lawyers for Bush's Justice Department Office of Legal Counsel.

During his second day in office, Obama signed an executive order banning the use of torture and ordering the closure of all CIA detention centers.

Copyright © 2009 AFP. All rights reserved. More »



Photo 1 of 3



Former Bush officials slam release of torture memos



Map



Related articles

President Holds Open Door For Prosecutions of Bush Officials For ...
ABC News - 17 minutes ago

Cheney: US gained information from interrogations

[Teach English in China](#)

Have 1 years experience? Good Pay, Flight, Visa & Insurance Provided.
www.EnglishFirst.com

[TESOL courses in Mexico](#)

©2009 Google - [About Google News](#) - [Blog](#) - [Help Center](#) - [Help for Publishers](#) - [Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Policy](#) - [Google Home](#)