

Leading lawyer calls for Rumsfeld prosecution

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Filed by John Byrne

The President of the legal nonprofit Center for Constitutional Rights, Michael Ratner, has resumed calls for a formal prosecution of ex-Bush Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld following revelations by a Congressional report that Rumsfeld was to blame for the Pentagon's policy allowing torture.

In a statement, he said that the report reaffirms findings he spelled out in his book published this September, [The Trial of Donald Rumsfeld: A Prosecution](#). Ratner's group was the first to volunteer an attorney to meet with one of the CIA's "ghost detainees."



"The Committee's report reaffirms that high-ranking administration officials, including Donald Rumsfeld, were directly responsible for the abuse and torture of detainees in Guantanamo, Iraq and Afghanistan," Ratner said in a statement to RAW STORY. "The brutal interrogation techniques used on our clients and many others were carried out despite well-documented opposition from military lawyers and others concerned by the illegality and ineffectiveness of the techniques."

"There is no question that Rumsfeld and the others must be held individually accountable, and it must be before a court of law. There must be consequences for their illegal activities," he said. "A special prosecutor should be appointed. To do otherwise is to send a message of impunity that will only embolden future administrations to again engage in serious violations of the law."

A [Senate Armed Services report](#) issued Thursday asserted that former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other members of the Bush administration "conveyed the message that physical pressures and degradation were appropriate treatment for detainees."

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According to the committee, prisoners were tortured in the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib, the US prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and other US military installations. Senators Carl Levin (D-MI) and John McCain (R-AZ) were responsible for the content of the Senate's findings.

The report determined that placing the blame on "a few bad apples," as Bush administration officials attempted to do in the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib scandal, is inappropriate.

The policies were adopted after government assessments determined waterboarding and other torture techniques were "100 percent effective" at breaking the wills of US officers who underwent the military's Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape program.

Ratner says Rumsfeld's being singled out is no coincidence.

"After reviewing thousands of documents, this bi-partisan committee confirmed that senior officials are directly responsible for ushering in one of the darkest chapters in our nation's history and the loss of our moral authority in the eyes of the world," Ratner said. "The report re-asserts that the torture and abuse of detainees in U.S. custody was the result of deliberate decisions made at the top, with explicit approval given by Rumsfeld and other officials for inhumane treatment of prisoners, and was not merely the work of a few bad apples way down the chain of command."

He adds that report notes that techniques used by the Pentagon were "based on Communist Chinese methods employed to obtain false confessions for propaganda. Professional interrogators agree that the fastest way to get the best information from a prisoner is through building trust and rapport, not torture. The recognition of the illegality and unreliability of this kind of evidence is critical in the cases of some of our clients, like Mohammed al Qahtani. Time and time again, we have seen that torture simply does not work, and only undermines our commitment to basic human rights."

"We hope the courts and the next administration take notice and take action," he concludes.

With Stephen Webster.