

John Kiriakou is a former CIA officer, former senior investigator for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and former counterterrorism consultant for ABC News. At the CIA, he was involved in critical counterterrorism missions following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but refused to be trained in so-called "enhanced interrogation techniques."

In 2002, Kiriakou became the chief of counterterrorism operations in Pakistan, where he led a CIA team in the March 2002 raid and capture of Abu Zubaydah, then thought to be al-Qaeda's third-ranking official. Soon after Abu Zubaydah's capture, the CIA distributed disinformation internally that he had been waterboarded once, and that he had "cracked." CIA officials later admitted that they had waterboarded Abu Zubaydah 83 times, and the waterboarding had not resulted in any actionable intelligence.

Following Abu Zubaydah's capture, Kiriakou became Executive Assistant to the CIA's Deputy Director for Operations, where he served as the Director of Central Intelligence's principal Iraq briefer.

Kiriakou left the CIA in March 2004. He later served as a senior investigator on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and as senior intelligence advisor to Committee Chairman Senator John Kerry. Kiriakou also authored a bestselling book, "The Reluctant Spy: My Secret Life in the CIA's War on Terror," and worked as an intelligence consultant for ABC News.

Throughout his career, Kiriakou received 10 CIA Exceptional Performance Awards, the CIA's Sustained Superior Performance Award, the Counterterrorism Service Medal, and the State Department's Meritorious Honor Award.

In 2007, Kiriakou appeared on ABC News in an interview with Brian Ross, during which he became the first CIA officer to confirm that the CIA waterboarded detainees, and he labeled waterboarding as "torture." Kiriakou's interview revealed that this practice was official U.S. policy approved at the highest levels of the government.

The government began investigating Kiriakou immediately after his media appearance. Five years later, he was charged with multiple felonies resulting from his whistleblowing. He became the sixth whistleblower indicted by the Obama administration under the Espionage Act - a law designed to punish spies.

Eventually, in order to avoid a trial that could have resulted in separation from his wife and five children for up to 45 years, he opted to plead guilty to one count of a reduced charge in exchange for a 30-month sentence.

Kiriakou is the only CIA officer to go to prison in connection with the torture program, despite the fact that he never tortured anyone. The CIA officers who actually engaged in torture after 9/11 have never been prosecuted, nor have the officials who condoned or ordered torture, or the attorneys who wrote memos justifying the torture. Similarly, the officials who destroyed the videotapes that provided clear evidence of torture have never been held accountable for their wrongdoing.

In 2012 Kiriakou was honored with the Joe A. Callaway Award for Civic Courage, an award given to individuals who "advance truth and justice despite the personal risk it creates."

Kiriakou was formally sentenced on January 25, 2013 to 30 months in federal prison. Two days prior to sentencing, he was honored by inclusion of his portrait in artist Robert Shetterly's series "Americans Who Tell the Truth," which features notable truth-tellers throughout American history.

Kiriakou reported to federal prison in Loretto, Pennsylvania on February 28, 2013 to begin serving his sentence, where he continued to speak out in a series of "Letters from Loretto," including his first, which provided a stunning portrait of prison life. In November 2013, the Peace and Justice Center of Sonoma County, California honored Kiriakou as its "Peacemaker of the Year." He was awarded the prestigious PEN First Amendment Award from the PEN Center USA in August 2015.

He was released from prison in February 2015.