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**Sen Burr should release the full torture report**

**BY TOMMY ROSS**

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(photo of Sen. Burr)

Sen. Richard Burr, chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, has withheld the committee’s full report on the CIA and torture. **JACQUELYN MARTIN** *AP*

I left North Carolina for Washington, D.C., roughly 16 years ago as a naive 20-something, determined to change the world. I set out to play a small role in making policies that would improve American communities and defend American values. I never imagined I would have to debate whether torture should be used in the name of those values. And yet throughout the 15 years I worked in Congress and the Pentagon, that exact debate has raged.

Four years ago, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released a landmark report detailing the CIA’s post-9/11 use of torture against detainees, its misrepresentations of those activities to Congress and the public, and the utter ineffectiveness of torture. I count myself privileged to have had the opportunity, while serving then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, to contribute to the report. Yet four years later, key elements of the CIA remain unaccountable — and the debate rages on.

In 2005, I began working as national security staffer for Rep. David Price. I was soon contacted by North Carolinians wanting to know more about North Carolina’s connection to the CIA torture program and how the government to account for its alarming departure from our laws and values.

Thanks to their persistence over many years, these citizens were able to establish the North Carolina Commission of Inquiry on Torture. The Commission’s recently released [report](http://www.nctorturereport.org/), Torture Flights: North Carolina’s Role in the CIA Rendition and Torture Program, not only sheds new light on the CIA’s program, but also represents a conscientious reckoning with North Carolina’s history of enabling key aspects of it.

The Senate investigation is the single finest example of congressional oversight I witnessed in my 15 years in government: a meticulously documented examination of the CIA’s secret detention and interrogation program. It found that detainees were subjected to exceedingly brutal treatment unquestionably constituting torture. It found that these brutal techniques did not work: they were not particularly useful in preventing threats to the homeland, and many such threats were inflated. Finally, it found that the CIA routinely lied -- to Congress, the White House, and the American public — about the nature of the program, its results, and its alleged benefits to our national security.

As impressive as the report is, it does not examine all aspects of the CIA’s program. Investigators could not scrutinize interrogation and detention practices at some sites due to discarded or destroyed records. Moreover, they left aside one of the key elements of the U.S. government’s treatment of individuals with suspected connections to terrorism: rendition. And it is here that the North Carolina Commission’s report picks up.

The Commission makes an invaluable contribution by training the microscope on the practice of rendition. The Commission found that at least 49 detainees were ferried in the dead of night on airplanes operated by North Carolina-based Aero Contractor, staging from North Carolina airports. Their report shows that rendition was not just transportation — it was the first part of the brutal and dehumanizing torture program.

Rendition enabled the CIA to convey prisoners to countries with fewer constraints against harsh treatment, and to do so absent any judicial process. At least 15 of the 49 prisoners were rendered to foreign custody, outside the scope of the Senate report.

The Commission’s report should sound an alarm to citizens of North Carolina and the nation. Both reports suggest a culture of secrecy in both the federal and state governments, and troubling tendencies to flout the law and cover tracks with lies or stonewalling. This behavior makes the country less safe.

Declassifying the Senate’s full report would be one important step toward change. Similarly, North Carolina’s leaders should acknowledge the copious evidence of the state’s involuntary role in torture, and begin an investigation of specific, well-documented cases.

The Commission’s report should also serve as a source of hope. It demonstrates the power of sustained grassroots activism for a just cause. And it shows how individuals can come together from different backgrounds and party affiliations — with few resources, no subpoenas, and no access to classified records — to achieve an outcome that is professional, constructive, and powerful. If such a group can succeed with so few resources and so many obstacles, what might Congress, with its professional staff, subpoena power, and access to classified documents, be able to achieve?

The American debate about torture will not end until we have the full story. We owe it to ourselves and our children to insist that our governments give it to us.

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