

U.S. State Department Criticism of “Stress and Duress” Interrogation Around the World

On December 26, the Washington Post reported that persons held at a CIA interrogation center in Bagram air base in Afghanistan were being subjected to "stress and duress" techniques such as standing or kneeling for hours, being held in awkward, painful positions, sleep deprivation through use of blinding lights, and hooding. In response to a Human Rights Watch letter, the Bush administration stated that “U.S. policy condemns and prohibits torture,” but it failed to address the specific reports of mistreatment at Bagram. However, the U.S. State Department has itself condemned as torture or other inhuman treatment many of the “stress and duress” techniques now allegedly being used by U.S. intelligence agencies. Listed below are some of the countries criticized for using these interrogation methods during 2000, 2001, and 2002 in the State Department’s annual “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.”

Country	Methods Used:
Burma	According to the State Department country reports, the Burmese military government “routinely subjected detainees to hard interrogation techniques designed to intimidate and disorient.” The techniques listed include being forced to squat or remain in uncomfortable periods for long periods of time, and, according to the 2000 and 2001 country reports, sleep and food deprivation and prolonged questioning under bright lights have also been used. The United States has imposed economic sanctions on Burma mainly due to its human rights practices, and continues to condemn its acts of repression and abuse.
Egypt	The country reports cite the stripping and blindfolding of prisoners among the principal methods of torture used by Egyptian authorities. Female prisoners and family members of detainees have also been forced to strip.
Eritrea	In its country reports, the State Department says that the Eritrean government “committed serious human rights abuses.” Some of the torture techniques cited include being subjected to prolonged sun exposure in high temperatures and the tying of hands and feet for extended periods of time.
Iran	According to country reports, common methods of torture used against political opponents in Iran are sleep deprivation and “suspension for long periods in contorted positions.”
Iraq	Iraqi security services regularly use food and water deprivation as a form of torture, according to the country reports.
Jordan	The State Department reports that Jordanian police and security forces have been alleged to engage in acts of torture. Some of the methods used include sleep deprivation and solitary confinement.

Israel	In the country reports, the State Department writes that Israeli human rights groups report that Israeli defense forces continue to use methods of interrogation prohibited by a 1999 decision by Israel's High Court. Prior to this decision, security officers were permitted to use "moderate and physical and psychological pressure" during questioning. One example of the "pressure" used was violent shaking. The State Department also states that these practices "often led to excesses."
Libya	According to the State Department, Libyan authorities commonly chain detainees to a wall for hours and deprive them of food and water.
Pakistan	In the country reports, the State Department notes that prolonged isolation and denial of food or sleep are common torture methods.
Saudi Arabia	The State Department has noted that Saudi Arabian officials, primarily from the Ministry of the Interior, use sleep deprivation as an interrogation tactic.
Tunisia	In the country reports, the State Department says that tactics such as food and sleep deprivation or confinement to a tiny, unlit cell are commonly used in Tunisia.
Turkey	The State Department describes Turkey as a country "where serious human rights problems remain[ed]" and torture is a regular practice. According to the 2001 country report, some of the many methods of torture employed by Turkish security forces include prolonged standing, isolation, and spreading rumors about incidents of torture.