

# Extraordinary rendition and terrorism criminology essay



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What is terrorism? Although it is difficult to come to a universal definition of terrorism, it can be described as warfare involving the use or threat of violence, typically against an influential noncombatant target, with the idea of creating fear in a broad audience (Domestic Terrorism 1). Terrorism emerges when a group of terrorists want to get their message across to a group of people with higher power, usually a government. The goal of the terrorists is to fight for rights, anti-imperialism, or any other cause deemed important by the group (Global Terrorism). The war on terrorism has been going on since the beginning of civilization.

Terrorism attacks occur very often throughout the world, usually at least one almost every day. Occasionally the attacks make headlines worldwide. One of the most famous and well-known terrorist attacks took place on September 11, 2001. A terrorist group from the Middle East known as al-Qaeda flew planes into the Twin Tower buildings located in the United States. Many people were killed and it was a devastating day for the United States. To prevent attacks such as this from happening again, the practice of extraordinary rendition was adopted by the United States. Extraordinary rendition can be defined as kidnapping alleged terrorists from their homeland or another country and holding them for questioning in secretive bases located throughout the country (Extraordinary Rendition 1). Although the war on terrorism requires precautions, extraordinary rendition is morally wrong due to the fact that it is not always effective and it involves harsh tactics.

Extraordinary rendition has been practiced by the United States C. I. A. for approximately 9 years. Before the September 11th terrorist attack in New  
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York, there were practices used to obtain terrorists. However, these practices were not legalized until after the September 11th attacks. The stated purpose of extraordinary rendition is to obtain terrorists before they launch an attack (Extraordinary Rendition 1). This practice is hard to justify since the government usually does not have solid evidence proving if the suspect is a terrorist prior to taking him hostage.

Surprisingly, extraordinary rendition is considered to be legal by the United States government. Ironically, this practice is not governed by any law (Extraordinary Rendition 1). It is believed to be a necessary tactic in the war against terrorism. The practices used by the C. I. A. tend to be very crude, but they are overlooked and considered to be non-torturous (Extraordinary Rendition 1). However, memos were leaked that showed evidence of violent practices used in interrogation (A crack in the wall of secrecy 1).

Extraordinary rendition is commonly referred to as simply a precaution and nothing more (Extraordinary Rendition 1). On the other hand, if we take a person hostage and cruelly torture them for information they might not possess, wouldn't that make us terrorists as well?

Other countries seem to agree that extraordinary rendition isn't a moral tactic. Throughout the world, it is heavily criticized (Extraordinary Rendition 1). The method of extraordinary rendition combines two illegal practices to make a "legal" practice. Countries throughout the world believe it is wrong due to the fact that it involves kidnapping and torturing, both crimes that are punishable under federal and international law (Extraordinary Rendition 1). It is double standard that the government is allowed to kidnap and abuse people; if a criminal were to do so, he'd be convicted.

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Harsh tactics are one of the C. I. A.'s top ways to obtain information from suspects. Possible terrorists are usually captured by the C. I. A. and either interrogated on United States soil or sent to another country to be questioned (The law: " extraordinary rendition" and presidential fiat. 8). Although that sounds safe, many of the foreign countries will use the torture method in order to obtain their information. For example, Egypt, Syria and Morocco have been identified as commonly using torture on their victims (Extraordinary Rendition 1). The current estimate number of prisoners is in the hundreds. As if that isn't bad enough, the government did not have warrants to take these prisoners hostage. The government simply believed the prisoners were terrorists, and decided that their " hunch" is good enough reasoning to arrest them.

In addition to assuming people are terrorists, the techniques they use to acquire information are quite horrific. A commonly used tactic is called waterboarding. Waterboarding is when water is inserted into the prisoner's lungs, resulting in him fearing the possibility of drowning. It is believed that this would cause him to reveal information he would not under ordinary circumstances. The government considers it to be a perfectly moral and legal practice. For example, Condoleezza Rice, the secretary of state during President George Bush's term, stated that this practice is completely acceptable and that the prisoners are treated with hospitality (Extraordinary rendition and the wages of hypocrisy 1). It is clear that the United States has a slim definition of torture, and the abusing of the supposed terrorists is overlooked.

In addition to waterboarding, the C. I. A. also uses the long time standing technique. This entails the prisoner being forced to stand while their hands and feet are shackled. Their feet are then shackled to the floor as well. The person is then left to stand there until they become exhausted of standing and tell the government the information they seek. The C. I. A. states that the exhaustion and sleep deprivation is what makes the victim reveals information. They are so delirious they do not realize they are leaking “important secrets”. The long time standing practice is said to be one of the most effective in obtaining information from stubborn suspects.

Although the techniques can be helpful, extraordinary rendition itself is not always effective. This practice involves taking the alleged terrorist hostage, and then interrogating him, usually with torture if he is not openly willing to reveal information with simple questions. If the prisoner is deemed to be innocent, he is then set free. Many times this occurs, and the government simply states they had the “wrong guy”. However, what if he really was a terrorist, and was just very good at lying? There is no way to be sure that what the prisoner is revealing is accurate information, and that it is not just a sneaky tactic to stay alive. At the same time, what if the government decides the prisoner is a terrorist when he is truly innocent?

On numerous occasions, innocent people are accused of being terrorists or being involved in terrorist activities. For example Benamar Benatta fled his home country of Algeria on September 5th, 2001 because he feared death in his homeland. Benatta then settled in Canada. He was taken captive the night after the September 11th attack in New York City. Without being offered the chance to testify against his capture or being told where he was

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being taken, the Canadian police drove him over the border and handed him over to the Americans to be questioned. The only reason he was thought to be a terrorist was because he was a Muslim and he had once served in the Algerian military. Nevertheless, this accusation was false. Benatta spent approximately three years in prison where he claims he was tortured. He was finally released on July 20, 2003 and allowed to return to Canada. Although he is now a free man, he says this incident will haunt him for the rest of his life (Bitter anniversary for rendition victim 1).

Another saddening example of an innocent person being taken hostage is the story of Binyam Mohamed. He was a 32 year old man of Ethiopian descent who came to the United Kingdom to find refuge. Mohamed was a cleaner who lived in London. He went on a trip to Pakistan and Afghanistan where he was arrested at the Karachi airport. According to sources, Mohamed was believed to be a member of the Taliban. Mohamed claims that he was taken around the world and tortured by officials who thought he was hiding information. Later on, Mohamed was deemed innocent and released from prison. (Bill for settling Guantanamo Bay 'torture' cases could top [pounds sterling]30m 2).

Richard Belmar was a British citizen. He converted to Islam in his teenage years and coincidentally traveled to Pakistan right before the September 11th incident. He was captured in Pakistan. Later on, Belmar was taken to other places such as Bagram and Guantnamo where he claims he was mistreated by the officials interrogating him. Belmar was eventually released in January of 2005 without charge (Bill for settling Guantanamo Bay 'torture' cases could top [pounds sterling]30m 2). These are just a few cases where an <https://assignbuster.com/extraordinary-rendition-and-terrorism-criminology-essay/>

innocent person was misfortunate and accused of being a terrorist; there are many other instances known all around the world.

Many of these hostages were only considered to be members of a terrorist group based on their background. Binyam was detained because he was Ethiopian. Belmar was arrested based on his religious background (Bill for settling Guantanamo Bay 'torture' cases could top [pounds sterling]30m 2). Mohamed was accused simply because he was Muslim (Bitter anniversary for rendition victim). Just because someone is of foreign descent and lives in another country does not mean they are there for terroristic reasons. For example, when hikers from the United States were captured in Iran, the United States government thought it was ridiculous and believed they should be set free immediately. What they failed to realize is they tend to do the same thing to any foreigners in the United States that appear "suspicious". It is quite racist of the United States to target people from the Middle East as possible terrorist suspects. In the U. S. each year, many of its own native citizens are in cahoots with terrorists all over the world. Why aren't these people targeted as well? Is it simply because they were born in the United States?

There is not always clear evidence that the suspect is a terrorist. When the government detains someone as a terrorist suspect, it is often within a few days after a terrorist attack. On the other hand, if they are hurrying to find possible suspects, they are probably thinking irrationally. Most likely they do not even perform a thorough background check on the suspect. It would take more than a few days to do so, and some of these victims are taken the day after or even the day of an attack. On many occasions, such as the ones <https://assignbuster.com/extraordinary-rendition-and-terrorism-criminology-essay/>

above, there is no proof that the captive is a terrorist (Bill for settling Guantanamo Bay 'torture' cases could top [pounds sterling]30m 2). If this is the case, they are set free, usually after being pointlessly tortured.

To sum it all up, extraordinary rendition is not a dependable technique to obtain information from suspects. It seems to have more negative consequences than good. Although it is a smart idea to try and prevent terrorist attacks from occurring, perhaps the government should think more rationally. Before detaining someone, a thorough and complete background check is needed. There also must be solid evidence and good reasoning to justify taking a person hostage.

Furthermore, something must be done about the harsh interrogation techniques. We cannot keep overlooking them as "necessary in the war against terrorism". These techniques may be helpful, but there are more humane and equally effective ways to obtain information. For example, instead of controlled drowning, officials could try calmly reasoning with the suspects. Although it seems as if this would not be effective, it has been proven to work in ordinary criminal investigations. Harming a suspect may make them refrain from telling any helpful information they might possess. Doing so might also provoke hatred for the United States. Benamar Benatta, a man who did not show hatred for the United States prior to his detainment, appeared to feel bitter resentment towards the U. S. after his three year captivity (Bitter anniversary for rendition victim 1-2). Even if an innocent suspect wasn't previously involved in any terrorist attacks, it might compel him to begin getting involved to get his revenge. All in all, by using this technique the United States may be furthering their susceptibility of being <https://assignbuster.com/extraordinary-rendition-and-terrorism-criminology-essay/>



attacked. Therefore, this proves that the practice of extraordinary rendition is insufficient, seeing as it may actually worsen the chances of terrorist attacks occurring instead of reducing them.