

Interrogations Yesterday and Today

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I served in Vietnam from 1968-1969 and I had an MOS of 0251 as a USMC Interrogator/Interpreter with the 11th ITT, MACV-I Corps. Most of the interrogations were performed right in the field where the PW's (Prisoners of War) were captured so that we could collect timely tactical intelligence. I am sure that this saved many lives of my fellow Marines since we were able to provide actionable information to field commanders. After we conducted field interrogations, high value PW's were sent to detention facilities for more in depth interrogations to determine higher level strategies, command structure, and future battle plans. Interrogations were removed from Marines in the 1970's and given over to the Army and the CIA. Most of the interrogations took place away from the battlefield and timely actionable intelligence was rare because of the time it took to transport PW's to facilities away from the action. The CIA was not so concerned with tactical intelligence as much as strategic, longer-range intelligence. I cannot speak to the quality of the Army interrogations except for the reports that I have read which indicate that they were more concerned with not crossing the line of approved techniques per the US Army Field Manual than they were with obtaining timely, on-the-scene information which could be immediately disseminated to battlefield commanders. Additionally, many of the interrogators were not trained in the language and customs of the enemy, as we were in Vietnam, so much of the intelligence was filtered through translators which meant that information could be misunderstood or manipulated.

Now CIA interrogators are under scrutiny by the US Justice Department and are intimidated by possible prosecution for their interrogation techniques. It appears that the Obama administration wants to release terrorists and go after those who questioned the terrorists. The CIA is now so blackballed that all future interrogations will be conducted by the FBI - a law enforcement agency. This is madness! The terrorists who were captured on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan or planned attacks against America are not scofflaws - they are captured enemy combatants. They are not bank robbers or carjackers or muggers. They are Jihadists - soldiers for Islamic extremism with a mission to attack the "Great Satan" America. The Obama administration and his Justice Department want us to return to a pre- 9/11 mentality. I want us to return to a Vietnam battlefield mentality. We would all be a lot safer if we did.

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