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Obama Creates New Interrogation Unit

In an effort to distance himself from the much-criticized interrogation methods used by the Bush administration and its agents, President Barack Obama has ordered the formation of a new interrogation group to handle the obtaining of information from detainees believed to possess intelligence critical to the security of the United States.

The new group is known officially as the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) and will be composed of experts from several intelligence and law enforcement agencies. The unit will be overseen by the National Security Council, further separating the CIA from the supervision of such interrogations. Beyond the organizational distance, the unit's leadership will be physically removed from the CIA as it will be housed at the headquarters of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI).



The modus operandi of the new group, the administration promises, will be distinct from that notoriously practiced by CIA-managed interrogators. Officials inside the establishment of the organization have informed reporters that the HIG will follow interrogation guidelines set forth in the Army Field Manual. These officials have said that "the Army Field Manual provides appropriate guidance on interrogation for military interrogators and that no additional or different guidance was necessary for other agencies." Of particular note is that fact that "water boarding" (simulated drowning) that attracted so much vitriol during the Bush administration is prohibited under the Army Field Manual. Sleep deprivation and long-term exposure to loud music are also forbidden under the Geneva Convention-compliant Army Field Manual.

One of the group's first tasks will be to compile a "playbook" of scientifically-sound interrogation measures that have been proven effective in the past. The group will be authorized to travel around the world to interrogate suspects. Exactly who will carry out the particular interrogations will be decided on a case-by-case basis, as directors will assemble a team of linguists, cultural experts, and experienced interrogators narrowly tailored to the specific subject and with the single focus of successfully accomplishing the overall national security goals.

As a matter of fact, officials familiar with the discussions and studies that lead to the creation of the new group have said that the primary goal of the organization is to gather valuable intelligence in order to prevent future terrorist attacks.

Photo of Guantanamo detainee: AP Images



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