
CIA Paid Torture Architects More Than \$80 Million

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Although the committee identified the contractors via pseudonyms, NBC News has previously identified them as Mitchell, Jessen & Associates, a Spokane, Washington, company run by two psychologists, Dr. John “Bruce” Jessen and Dr. James Mitchell, who had both previously worked with the U.S. Air Force.

The report states that when they were hired the two did not have “specialized knowledge of al Qaeda, a background in counterterrorism or any relevant cultural or linguistic experience.”...

In late July 2002 the CIA turned to the psychologists, according to both former intelligence officials and congressional investigators. Jessen was then a senior psychologist at the Defense Department agency that taught special operations forces how to resist and endure torture via so called “SERE” training, or Survival, Evasion, Resistance Escape training, at a special “SERE” school...

Within days of hiring Mitchell, Jessen & Associates, the CIA asked the Defense Department for a rush “list of exploitation and interrogation techniques that had been effective against Americans” in the SERE training...

Working with Mitchell, Jessen & Associates, the CIA soon developed a menu of 20 enhanced techniques — a list that was ultimately whittled down to 10, mainly because some of proposed techniques were considered too harsh even for terrorists. The techniques included waterboarding, sleep deprivation and forcing prisoners to assume “stress positions.”

John Rizzo, the acting CIA general counsel who met with the psychologists, wrote in his book, "Company Man," that he found some of what Mitchell and Jessen were recommending "sadistic and terrifying." One technique, he wrote, was "so gruesome that the Justice Department later stopped short of approving it."

NBC News has been told by a senior U.S. intelligence official that Mitchell and Jessen had suggested "mock burial," in which a detainee would be led to believe he would be buried alive if he didn't talk. It was not approved.
