

British Musicians' Union Motion to FIM Johannesburg 2008

Music in Interrogation

The war in Iraq provided the most definitive evidence to date of the use of recorded music by US interrogators to break the will of their captives.

The US's Psychological Operations Company (PSY OPS) has acknowledged this practice and reported that it was used to break detainees resistance through sleep deprivation and the playing of music that prisoners would find culturally offensive.

Human Rights Organisation Amnesty International, have said that such tactics may constitute torture and that coalition forces could be in breach of the Geneva Convention.

Congress calls upon the FIM Executive Committee to make known the wholehearted opposition to these reported practices, which it considers to be, at the very least inhumane and a potential infringement of musicians moral rights.

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Introduction

History and Context of use of music/sound as torture

How does music come to be used as an instrument of torture? Although information about it has been slowly filtering through since 2003/4 when the US began detaining Iraqis in large numbers and interrogating them, in fact, the US has been developing these techniques over the past 50 years. Naomi Klein in her 2007 book *The Shock Doctrine*, describes in graphic detail the highly disturbing work of Dr Ewan Cameron, a psychiatrist at Mc Gill University who was secretly funded by the CIA to investigate the use of extreme sensory deprivation and stimulation on patients with mental problems. His techniques (used to attempt to brainwash patients and replace their neuroses with something more positive). included high dosages of electric shocks administered to patients for 30 days in a row, cocktails of drugs including cocaine to induce paralysis, total sensory deprivation in isolation and extended sleep (for up to 35 days). Those that were brought out of isolation were bombarded with sensory stimulation, voices, music and so on and most of those involved never recovered from what must have been a nightmarish experience. Cameron was later discredited and the CIA destroyed its files relating to this 'experiment' although subsequently, highly damaged individuals and their families have sought information through medical records which have survived.

However, that was sadly not the end of the story - a 128 page secret CIA manual on interrogation dated 1963 contained the techniques that had been developed by the doctor and have been developed and refined ever since in Vietnam, Nicaragua, the Gulf war and currently in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay and the various secret rendition sites around the globe. Clearly the US needed a source of torture that would not leave tell tale marks and so created the idea of 'torture lite', an element of which includes the use of music. The manual's shock inducing formula of sensory deprivation followed by sensory overload was described by historian (Alfred W McCoy) as : ' the first real revolution in the cruel science of pain for over three centuries.' and it could not have happened without Dr Cameron's experiments in the 1950s.

The 'torture lite' or no touch torture concept was born so that the US could illegally continue to torture detainees in interrogations as long as the pain inflicted was not equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury such as organ failure (US Justice Department). Thus ushered in the era of psychological torture and the use of physical tortures such as waterboarding, hooding, and shackling detainees in painful positions. This meant that the US was free to use the secret methods it had developed in the 50s only now in the open, because in their twisted view, their methods do not really constitute torture under the old definition. In reality they are often more devastating with people losing their minds. According to Klein, one of the first people to face this new order of torture was Jose Padilla who was classified as an enemy combatant and removed from the justice system to face 1,307 days of intense sensory deprivation. He was held in pitch black surroundings, in solitary confinement with goggles, headphones and shackles put on him and when taken to interrogations he was bombarded with lights and pounding music and other sounds. He was destroyed both mentally and physically and quite unable to defend himself in a later trial. Currently the same thing is happening in Guantanamo bay with detainees (deemed by the US to be outside of the due process of law) on arrival are put into intense sensory deprivation with hoods, goggles, and heavy headphones to block out all sound. They are left in isolation for months and then taken out to have their senses bombarded with barking dogs, strobe lights, and endless tape loops of babies crying, cats meowing, and most relevant to this context, blaring music.

History of previous use of music as a weapon

Alongside the use of music and sound in interrogations, the US also has a history of using music as a weapon in the battlefield and in various other military operations. In 1989, the United States invaded Panama. President Noriega sought and was given refuge in the Vatican nunciature (embassy) in Panama City, where he remained for 10 days while a U.S. Army psychological warfare team blasted rock music at the building. Describing the current scene of the siege, now a construction site, Alcibiades Correa, 58, a security guard present during the acoustic assault in 1989, said that he preferred the drilling of construction to the noise from the 'acoustic bombardment. "I actually prefer that to the music. God it was awful, boom boom boom, day and night,".

Also in 1989 was the infamous 51 siege of Waco in Texas (which ended in 81 men, women and 21 children being burned to death) the FBI, US Army and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, included psy-ops tactics of sleep deprivation by blaring loud music and also the squeals of rabbits being slaughtered at the inhabitants of the community.

Since then, acoustic bombardment has been used as standard practice in Iraq. Specific acoustic weapons have recently been created as part of the development of non lethal weapons strategy; specifically, long range acoustic devices (LRADS) capable of projecting a strip of sound at 120db's i.e. short bursts of intense acoustic energy, designed to incapacitate people by causing spatial disorientation. Similar weapons deployed by Israel in Gaza and Lebanon produce the effect of "being hit by a wall of air that is painful on the ears, sometimes causing nosebleeds and leaving you shaking inside".(Davison and Lewer 2006). The (LRADS) can be wired up to modified MP3 players to deliver blasts of music or what the US military describes as 'deterrent tones'. It is likely that these machines were used by the 361st PsyOps company who 'prepared the battlefield' for the November 2004 siege of Fallujah by bombarding the city with music—supposedly, with Metallica's "Hells' Bells" and "Shoot to Thrill" among other things (DeGregory 2004). PsyOps spokesman Ben Abel explained to reporter Lane DeGregory of the St. Petersburg (Florida) Times, "These harassment missions work especially well in urban settings like Fallujah. The sounds just keep reverberating off the walls." Abel added "it's not the music so much as the sound. It's like throwing a smoke bomb. The aim is to disorient and confuse the enemy to gain a tactical advantage" (DeGregory 2004). Abel made clear that although the tactic of bombarding the

enemy with sound was made at the command level, the choice of music was left to soldiers in the field: "...our guys have been getting really creative in finding sounds they think would make the enemy upset...These guys have their own mini-disc players, with their own music, plus hundreds of downloaded sounds. It's kind of personal preference how they choose the songs. We've got very young guys making these decisions" (DeGregory 2004). On the battlefield, then, the use of music as a weapon is perceived to be incidental to the use of sound's ability to affect a person's spatial orientation, sense of balance, and physical coordination. It is because music is incidental that the choice of repertoire is delegated to individual PsyOps soldiers' creativity.

First hand accounts of use of music as torture

The authorised use of music as torture is hard to trace, but the Commander of the US forces in Iraq, Lt General Ricardo Sanchez signed a memorandum in 2003 which contained approved elements of the Guantanamo policy and Afghanistan policy which included the use of dogs, stress positions, sensory deprivation, yelling, loud music, light control and sleep deprivation as interrogation techniques. Some 26,000 people held by the US in 'dark' prisons and many of them who endure these techniques, are kept hidden by the US from the reach of the law and have been refused the rights and protections inherent in the Geneva Conventions. First hand accounts of the use of music as torture began appearing in 2003 from evidence given by released detainees. Evidence given by an anonymous FBI agent, dated Dec. 5, 2003, describes at least three incidents involving Guantanamo detainees being chained to the floor and subjected to "extreme heat, extreme cold, or extremely loud rap music". . The June 12, 2005 issue of Time included a story based on the 84-page log of Mohammed al Qahtani's interrogation there from November 2002 to January 2003 (Zagorin and Duffy 2005) . Qahtani's interrogations began at midnight; whenever he dozed he was awakened either by water poured over his head or the sound of Christina Aguilera's music. In December 2005, Human Rights Watch posted brief first-person accounts of detainees released from a secret prison in Afghanistan, many of whom asserted that part of their experience included being held in a pitch-black space and forced to listen to music that they described, variously, as "unbearably loud", "infidel", or "Western". The same posting included the account of Guantanamo prisoner Benyan Mohammed, an Ethiopian who had lived in Britain, and who had been forced to listen to music by Eminem (Slim Shady) and Dr Dre for twenty days before the music was replaced by "horrible ghost laughter and Halloween sounds." A long New York Times story on March 19, 2006, described in detail "Camp Nama", the headquarters of a multiple-agency interrogation unit at Baghdad International Airport; there, "high-value detainees"—those believed to have information directly pertinent to battlefield movements, terrorist ringleaders, or imminent terrorist attacks—were sent first to the so-called "Black Room", a garage-sized, windowless space painted black where "rap music or rock'n'roll blared at deafening decibels over a loudspeaker" (Schmitt and Marshall 2006) . Read together, these reports suggest that the "deafening music" is usually delivered to a detainee who has been chained into a "stress position", in a pitch-black space made uncomfortably hot or cold.

Reprieve, [the UK base advocacy group] have documented the experiences of several detainees both at Guantanamo and and at the various ghost prisons that the US operates around the globe out of sight and outside of the law. In 2005 in the dark prison in Afghanistan, prisoners (all held without charge or trial) were chained to walls, deprived of food and drinking water, and kept in total darkness with loud rap or heavy metal music blaring for **weeks** at a time. British resident Binyam Mohamed who is still in Guantanamo says that he was held there whilst Dr Dre, Eminem and horrible ghost music was blasted into the cell. He said that he could hear other prisoners knocking their heads against walls and doors screaming their heads off. He was later transferred to Morocco where he claims he was held for 18 months in small cells, with no light, and was beaten and handcuffed for hours with headphones blaring rock music by Aerosmith or rap music by Tupac. Laid Saidi an algerian ghost prisoner now released without charge, what

held by the CIA in custody in Afghanistan for 16 months in a 'dark prison' with deafening Western music. He said he remembers men in black shouting at him: 'You are in a place that is out of the world. No one knows where you are, no one is going to defend you.' British man and former Guantanamo prisoner Mozzam Begg describes the Marilyn Manson room in the Bagram airbase out of which prisoners emerged 'like vegetables.'

In Guantanamo itself, released Swedish detainee Mehdi Ghezali described to Amnesty the pain of short shackling in interrogations and said that this procedure was often used. 'There was a ring attached to the floor. They chained your hands and feet to this ring. You had to sit chained with your arms between your legs from underneath. In this way they let you sit for hours.' During interrogations, rooms were made uncomfortably hot or cold and rap and heavy metal music was played at painfully loud volumes along with untuned radio noise. In 2004 the New York Times described the procedures at Guantanamo: 'They made uncooperative prisoners strip to their underwear, having them sit in a chair whilst shackled hand and foot to the floor, and forcing them to endure strobe lights and screamingly loud rock and rap music played through two loud speakers, while the air-con was turned up to maximum.' The music included Limp Bizkit, Rage Against the Machine, Eminem, Meat Loaf, Tupac, and Barney's theme song. According to various sources it takes four days for the US military or CIA to 'break' a detainee by doing an interrogation for 15 hours on with strobe lights, a loud insistent tape of cats meowing interspersed with babies crying and deafening loud music blasted at the prisoner, with four hours off. The sleep deprivation combined with the lights and beats wears the detainee down.

The health consequences of psychological torture can be devastating as it shatters the sense of self and also of everyday reality, and the lack of any external marks leaves the prisoner with no objective proof of their ordeal. The effects can also last long after the torture was initially endured and sometimes detainees never recover. Short and long term effects include: memory impairment, reduced capacity to concentrate, somatic complaints such as back ache and headache, hyper arousal, avoidance irritability, severe depression with vegetative symptoms, nightmares, feelings of shame and humiliation, and post traumatic stress disorder. Dr Stephen Xenakis a retired Brigadier General in the US Army and a practising psychiatrist, says that sonic bombardment is: 'Really traumatising to the brain. It will lead to anxiety and the kind of symptoms you get with post traumatic stress disorder.'

Musicians responses

David Gray has protested against his song Babylon being used as torture music in interrogations as has Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine. He says: 'The fact that our music has been co-opted in this barbaric way is really disgusting. That particular kind of interrogation has rightly been cited by Amnesty as torture. If you're at all familiar with the ideological teachings of the band and its support for human rights, that's really hard to stand.' The American Musicological Society created a resolution condemning the use of music as torture and 'protest the contamination of our cultures by the misappropriation of music as a weapon of psychological torture.' They are petitioning their political representatives to ban its use.

Musicians **for** their music being used as torture include Steve Anselm of the death metal band Decide. He says: 'It's cool. If we're up to military standards of audio abuse, it makes me feel like Decide's doing a part for the troops.' Likewise Steve Bennon bassist of aggro-metal band Drowning Pool: 'People assume that we should be offended that somebody in the military thinks our song is annoying enough, that, played over and over it can physiologically break someone down. I take it as an honour to think that our song could perhaps be used to quell another 9/11 attack or something like that.' James Hetfield of Metallica responded with pride that his music

was culturally offensive to the Iraqis - he considers his music 'a freedom to express my insanity- if they're not used to freedom, I'm glad to be part of the exposure'.

Official US Response

In the 2005 US Army Report into FBI Allegations of Abuse at Guantanamo which incidentally covered a three year period and 24,000 interrogations- it is reproduced verbatim below.

Allegation: That DoD interrogators improperly played loud music and yelled loudly at detainees.

Finding #4: On numerous occasions between July 2002 and October 2004, detainees were yelled at or subjected to loud music during interrogation.

Technique: Authorized: FM 34-52 technique – Incentive and Futility – acts used as reward for cooperating or to create futility if not cooperating.

Discussion: Almost every interviewee stated that yelling and the use of loud music were used for interrogations at GTMO. On a few occasions, detainees were left alone in the interrogation booth for an indefinite period of time while loud music played and strobe lights flashed. The vast majority of yelling and music was accomplished with interrogators in the room. The volume of the music was never loud enough to cause any physical injury. Interrogators stated that cultural music would be played as an incentive. Futility technique included the playing of Metallica, Britney Spears, and Rap music.

Organizational response: None.

Recommendation #4: The allegation should be closed. Recommend JTF- GTMO develop specific guidance on the length of time that a detainee may be subjected to futility music. Placement of a detainee in the interrogation booth and subjecting him to loud music and strobe lights should be limited and conducted within clearly prescribed limits.

Conclusion

This is 2008; no forms of torture should exist and the laws clearly states this. The use of music as torture and weaponry is abhorrent to us as musicians and as listeners to music.

Reprieve is a charity which provides frontline investigation and legal representation to prisoners denied justice by powerful governments, such as those held without charge or trial in Guantanamo bay and the countless secret prisons beyond. They have made it one of their initiatives called 'Torture Unplugged' to expose and stop the use of music as torture by encouraging musicians, and music industry reps to speak out against it by: making powerful statements against music torture; declaring their music torture free and potentially launching copyright and brand damage cases against the US government. The British Musicians Union wholly supports this stance and hope that the FIM Congress will too.