

WHY WE NEED THE NC COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON TORTURE:

“Extraordinary rendition” refers to the secret transfer of captives by the U.S. government to locations in Europe, Asia, Africa, or the Middle East where they can be held secretly and tortured during interrogation. **A large body of evidence leaves little doubt that the CIA has maintained important infrastructure for its extraordinary rendition program at the taxpayer-funded airports in Johnston and Lenoir counties, North Carolina.** Flight records show that planes linked to extraordinary rendition have also visited other public airports in North Carolina.

North Carolina has provided infrastructure allowing the CIA to ferry prisoners to secret overseas “black sites” and to third-country jails where they have been held indefinitely and subjected to inhumane treatment and barbaric tortures.

For years, North Carolina has provided infrastructure allowing the CIA to ferry prisoners to secret overseas “black sites” and to third-country jails where they have been held indefinitely and subjected to inhumane treatment and barbaric tortures. In addition, credible reports suggest that the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) of the U.S. Department of Defense, headquartered in Fayetteville, may have helped maintain overseas “black sites” where detainees were held secretly and tortured. Centurion Aviation, based at Fayetteville Regional Airport, has been linked to extraordinary rendition and “black sites.”

TORTURE IS IMMORAL AND ILLEGAL.

Torture is immoral and a violation of international and U.S. laws. Yet at all levels our government has failed to discharge its legal duty to create a system of accountability. The CIA’s affiliate, Aero Contractors, is based at the Johnston County Airport and may still be flying missions for the CIA that involve secret detention and abuse of detainees. **Strong evidence ties Aero Contractors to the transport for torture of many specific people, including Mohamed Bashmilah, Binyam Mohamed, Khaled el-Masri, Bisher al-Rawi, and Abou el-Kassem Britel. Claiming that state secrets would be compromised, the Bush and Obama administrations have consistently argued that these men should be denied legal recourse. All branches of the federal government are avoiding their obligation to seek justice, and North Carolina’s state and county officials have refused to investigate our state’s documented role in torture.**

While extraordinary rendition has caused serious damage to those who were kidnapped and tortured, as a state and a nation we are all harmed. **The highest U.S. officials ordered soldiers and secret agents into criminal conduct without regard for the cost to those individuals’ personal integrity and psychological well-being, or the risk of undermining community support for their service and sacrifice.**

TORTURE MAKES US LESS SAFE.

Torture makes us less safe. Interrogation experts know that torture generates unreliable intelligence, and that resources are squandered chasing bad leads. Images from Abu Ghraib and the stories of innocent men who were crippled or whose families were threatened only serve to recruit new terrorists. Abusing human beings overseas goes hand-in-hand with heightened disregard for human life in our own communities, prisons, and detention centers.

The United States’ resort to torture and secret detention and its leaders’ refusal to confront those violations have robbed us of some of our most precious birthrights. Among those are the rule of law and the goodwill and respect of millions around the world.

CITIZENS CAN BEGIN TO MAKE AMENDS.

Across our differences, Americans are united by common goals for our communities and our country. We all want safety and peace for our children. We all value human life and are ready to stand up for democracy. **Together, we can acknowledge what went wrong and bring it to the light of day. We can seek out those who were harmed, hear their stories, establish an historical record, offer apologies where appropriate, and begin to make amends.**

VISITORS TO THE PEACE BOOTH HAVE ALREADY MADE A DIFFERENCE

At the Peace Booth in 2010, 800 North Carolinians from more than 80 communities signed a letter of apology to victims and survivors of kidnapping, secret detention and torture facilitated by Aero Contractors.

Copies of that letter, translated into the victim's or survivor's first language – where possible – were delivered to nearly a dozen of these individuals, their attorneys or their families.

Khadija Anna Britel, the wife of one victim – the Italian citizen, Abou El-Kassim Britel, who was freed April 14, 2011 after 8½ years in a Moroccan prison – courageously delivered a copy of the letter to Kassim during a visit with him.

She said at the time that Kassim was encouraged to learn that Americans were reaching out to him and pledging to work for accountability from their elected officials.

Recently, Anna wrote the Johnston County Board of Commissioners:

"Every day I see Kassim suffer ... He often remains in silence for hours, and has difficulty communicating with anyone ... he paces up and down the long hallway in our house and I know that he feels that he is still in prison."

"The evil that we experienced has scarred us deeply. We are tired, and incredulous that human beings can suffer so much while others remain totally indifferent."

"He thinks of his ruined reputation and his lost employment, and asks himself what he will do in the days to come, what will we live on? ... We feel alone. Our sustenance is faith."

"You can do something positive."



**Abou El-Kassim Britel,
before his capture**



**After his ordeal, Kassim bears
scars from his torture**

Honor the Courageous Individuals Who Said 'No' to Torture

We owe it to those who stood up for our shared values, the rule of law, and for human rights to speak out and demand accountability for the high officials who condoned and implemented a policy of torture.

ACCOUNTABILITY TODAY PREVENTS TORTURE TOMORROW.

Sgt. Joe Darby was serving in Iraq when he discovered a set of photographs showing other members of his company torturing prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison. The discovery anguished him, but ultimately he burned the photos onto a CD and delivered it with an anonymous letter to the Army's Criminal Investigation Command. Although he was the target of death threats, Darby has said that he "never regretted for one second" turning in the photographs.

Former **Navy General Counsel Alberto Mora** led an effort inside the Department of Defense to oppose legal theories put forward by Justice Department lawyers that justified the use of coercive interrogation techniques. Mora argued that the techniques were ineffective and unlawful.

Col. Morris Davis, an Air Force officer and lawyer, was appointed to serve as the third Chief Prosecutor in the Guantánamo military commissions system. Col. Davis made clear that he would never permit the introduction of evidence extracted through waterboarding and insisted that the proceedings be transparent. Col. Davis resigned from his post in 2008.

SOURCE: www.aclu.org/honor-those-who-said-no-torture