

Gazeta Wyborcza

9 September 2010

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‘Clues from the CIA review’ *

According to the AP, CIA agent simulated an execution of a terror suspect who was kept in a secret prison in Poland.

“Poland has nothing to do with it,” said the former Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski.

Tuesday night the AP Agency informed that an agent identified as Albert who was forced to leave the Agency as a result of accusations concerning unauthorized interrogation methods still works for the CIA. The Agency noted that that harsh interrogations took place in a secret prison in Poland.

At the turn of 2002/2003 Albert interrogated a USS Cole bombing plotter Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri.

The fact that the interrogations were brutal was already mentioned in the public portions of a CIA rapport published online. The officer’s name as well the location of the secret prison remains however unknown.

Quoting several former intelligence officials, AP claims the interrogation took place in Poland. No details are revealed. However according to Polish and foreign media the secret CIA centre was located in a training facility in Kiejkuty in Masuria. CIA airplanes carrying suspects from all over the world were landing on the nearby airport in Szymany from December 2001 on.

According to the AP, the CIA officer racked the slide of the unloaded weapon and revved a power drill containing to bit near the suspects head.

The Americans are mostly interested whether the officers were using unauthorized interrogation methods with permission from their supervisors. It is an element of a broader discussion on the methods used by Georg W. Bush administration to fight terrorism after September 11th.

For Poland on the other hand it provides another clue that confirms the existence of secret CIA prisons in our country in the period 2001-03.

Despite press reports and what the committee of inquiry of The Council of Europe established, Polish governments kept claiming that there were no secret CIA facilities in Poland.

Only in 2008 did the prosecutor’s office commence an investigation.

Recently Gazeta Wyborcza informed that the prosecutors are considering pressing charges against those key politicians of the SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) who were in power back then. They would be tried by the State Tribunal.

Former Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who was in office at the time when the alleged CIA facilities were located in Poland, claims that Poland knew nothing about it. According to him Poland did cooperate with the American Intelligence, but there were no prisons in Poland. He personally did not know about the interrogations or tortures. He believes that although war on terror may require harsh methods, no army is allowed to act against internal rules or law.

In his view, democracy may not remain helpless when dealing with terrorists who use every means available to them; it is extremely difficult to find the right balance between security and freedom.

Yesterday in New Delhi Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, said that the national interest requires to stay discreet and restrained. “Contrary to many other countries, in Poland prosecutors are dealing with this case. The Polish state should however remain more discreet than others who are involved”.

“what happened in Kiejkuty”

He is referring to a CIA review prepared in 2004 where ten instances of blatant law abuse committed within the first four years of the so called war on terror are mentioned.

The organizations fighting for human rights won the case to make the review public, however all personal names as well as the names of states and cities were left out.

The review speaks broadly about the case of Abd Al-Rahim Al-Nashiri. According to anonymous sources of the AP Agency, the terrorist was interrogated in a prison in Poland, just days after the facility was opened.

“For the first time, CIA confirms the existence of secret prisons in Poland”- says Adam Bodnar secretary of the management of Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka, who supervises the observatory of the CIA activity in Poland.

Bodnar adds that finally more details came to light – we know who interrogated whom, when and where. According to him Polish prosecutors should ask the Americans to allow them to interrogate the former officers mentioned in the review.

“For the time being, we will ask for access to the review of the CIA inspection, since this document remains unknown to us.” – said the prosecutor Robert Majewski

Polish Prosecutor’s Office has been investigating the case since December 2008. It remains classified, but Gazeta Wyborcza found that the former leaders who allowed the existence of the American prisons in Poland may be facing charges before the State Tribunal.

Asked how long will the investigation take, Majewski answers that “definitely several months” and that it will remain classified.

-If we bring the accusations, only the charges will be made public. The substantiation as well as the trial will remain classified. Prosecutors Office will never be allowed to reveal any facts. This is how the regulations concerning classified data are constructed – only those who created the documents are authorized to disclose them – explains the prosecutor. He refuses to say which agency may declassify the information.

-I have nothing to say on this matter – said, as usually, Leszek Miller , former Polish Prime Minister.

Gazeta: Aren't you concerned by the rappers?

Miller: No, absolutely not, because this matter does not concern Polish secret service being accused of torture, but the American Agency. Polish Prime Minister is not the head of the American intelligence agencies.

Gazeta: But the torture took place in Poland?

Miller: Please ask this question to the American government.

Gazeta: Are you considering the thought that the Americans were torturing without your knowledge?

Miller: I won't say anything else.

Gazeta: Is it possible that as the Prime Minister you didn't know about what was taking place in a secret American prison in Poland?

Miller: I cannot say anything else.

Gazeta: If that was true would you be concerned?

Miller: I don't want to comment on that.

In the late nineties Al-Nashiri, who was born in Saudi Arabia, conceived of a plot to attack a U.S. vessel using a boat full of explosives. Osama Bin Laden approved of the plan, and provided money for it. First, al-Nashiri attempted to attack the USS *The Sullivans* but the boat he used was overloaded with explosives and began to sink.

The second attempt the USS *Cole* bombing, was successful. 17 U.S. sailors were killed. This brought Al-Nashiri fame and respect within al-Qaeda.

Al-Nashir was arrested in Dubai in November 2002. He was then kept in prisons in Thailand and on 5th December 2002 was allegedly taken to a prison in an old polish intelligence facility in Kiejkuty in Poland.

Al-Nashiri was interrogated by an agent indented as Albert, born in Egypt, who before becoming an CIA agent worked in New York as a translator for FBI. Albert is said to be

wielding an unloaded gun and revving a power drill near the prisoner's head. The gun was unloaded and the power drill did not have a bit but the hooded prisoner could not have known about it. The officer pretended he was investigating someone in a nearby room and threatened he would do the same to Al-Nashiri's family.

In January 2003, CIA officers who arrived in Poland heard about those incidents and reported them to headquarters.

There were arguments at CIA headquarters about al-Nashiri's treatment and the usage of the power drill. After two weeks al-Nashiri was "compliant" and some officers thought tough questioning was unnecessary.

Albert and his CIA supervisor at the time, a second official known as Mike, who was in charge of the prison, were reprimanded for their involvement in the incident.

Now Albert is 60 and sometimes trains CIA officers at a facility in northern Virginia how to handle different scenarios they might face in the field.

"The notion that an individual involved in one of the more notorious episodes of the CIA's interrogation program is still employed directly or indirectly by the U.S. government is scandalous," said Ben Wizner, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Federal prosecutor John Durham is looking at the case - the federal authorities are examining it for possible charges. The lawyers remain however skeptical since the gun was unloaded and the drill contained no bit

Al-Nashiri is now held at Guantanamo Bay prison, his lawyer Nancy Hollander said torture would be a mitigating factor in his trial.

In the evening PAP received a statement from CIA spokesman George Little who said the CIA will not discuss publically the location of the facilities which were a part of the former detention program. He stressed that the officers interrogating the detainees did not violate the law.

* The translation is prepared by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and has not been authorized by the 'Gazeta Wyborcza' daily newspaper