President Trump says that ‘torture works’. His office has released a draft order stating an intention to make ‘modifications and additions’ to the policies the US employs for the ‘... safe, lawful, and effective interrogation of enemy combatants captured in the fight against radical Islamism’.

This not only worry human rights groups, but it also suggests that he has taken no account of the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence’s Study of the CIA’s detention and interrogation activity from 2001–2009, on which he must surely have been briefed. This report concluded (as did the CIA) that torturing prisoners was not an effective means of obtaining intelligence or cooperation. It describes Orwellian ‘enhanced interrogation’ techniques including slapping, walling, stress positioning, cramped confinement, sleep deprivation, confinement with insects, waterboarding, sexual humiliation, forcible high-volume IV injections, extreme temperatures, and the rectal infusion of puréed food. These methods have since been defined as torture by the European Court of Human Rights.

Interrogation by torture relies on an assumption that fear, stress, and pain ‘break’ suspects into delivering useful information. It’s a view replayed in film and TV, where torture is a chilling plot device driving suspects into delivering useful information. It’s a view replayed in film and TV, where suspects talk and describe questioning that they must have been on evidence as well as ethics. Law enforcers

Out of Hours

Donald Trump and the CIA

\[ \text{“Torture makes confession more likely, but such confessions are unreliable...”} \]

non-linear. Pain management is a learned technique, and individuals withstand pain to a far greater degree than they, or interrogators, anticipate. He suggests, chillingly, that there is probably no technique for creating pain that will induce a well-prepared individual to reveal information before going into shock or a dissociative state. Torture makes confession more likely, but such confessions are unreliable: false confessions are easy to elicit. Men tortured in Turkey in 2013 describe giving interrogators random names to make it stop. Those named were also arrested, and tortured for more names.

FOUNDED ON THE FICTION OF 24

O’Mara suggests that people are more likely to reveal genuine memory if actively listened to, as people are wired to want to describe motivation and experience. He refers to police interviews in which most suspects talked and describes questioning strategies that increase truthfulness, such as developing rapport, asking about events in reverse order, adding irrelevant questions, and maintaining eye contact. He calls for appropriate training of interrogators, based on evidence as well as ethics. Law enforcers may not feel like being nice to suspects, but, if doing so yields useful information and does not compromise their morality, it surely makes sense. His book ends with discussion of the enduring psychological toll of torture on torturers themselves. The CIA’s ‘enhanced interrogation program was, by its own admission, ineffective, morally catastrophic, and founded on fiction. CIA operatives admitted they based their approach on Jack Bauer, a character in 24 for whom torture generally saves the day. The Senate report is dark but essential reading for a president claiming to know what works. He cites extensive evidence that stress, fear, and pain undermine the brain’s executive functions, including recall and cognition, making memory fallible, and pushing individuals into confabulation that they may actually believe. Memories are not recorded chronologically; they are fragile, subject to revision and loss with time, suggestion, and new information. Memory reconstructs; it does not reproduce.

O’Mara describes evidence that punitive behaviour encourages lies, not truth. Truth requires cooperation, which does not result from aversive therapy and violation of social norms. Stress modifies pain perception. The experience of pain is unpredictable and

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