

Gina Haspel: Torturers Should be Punished, not Promoted

US president Donald Trump should never have nominated Gina Haspel to head the Central Intelligence Agency.

When Haspel offered to withdraw her name from consideration, as the *Washington Post* reports she did during a White House meeting in early May, her offer should have been gratefully accepted.

The US Senate should vote against confirming her appointment — ideally, by a margin of 100-0. Each “yes” vote will darken the stain on America’s honor represented by Haspel’s career thus far.

Gina Haspel doesn’t belong at the head of the CIA. She doesn’t belong in the CIA at all. Nor does she belong in any other position of government authority.

Gina Haspel belongs in prison.

As “Chief of Base” at a secret CIA prison in Thailand called “Cat’s Eye,” Haspel oversaw the torture, including “waterboarding,” of Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, suspected mastermind of the October 2000 attack on the USS Cole in Yemen.

Later, as Chief of Staff to Jose Rodriguez, head of the CIA’s National Clandestine Service, Haspel drafted a cable ordering destruction of videotapes documenting the torture of al-Nashiri and of another prisoner, Abu Zubaydah.

So far as I can tell, neither of the above claims is disputed by Haspel or by anyone else.

Torture is a crime under both US law and international law. And in the form of “waterboarding,” it is a crime for which the US executed six Japanese generals after World War 2.

United States Code, Title 18 §2340A provides for a fine and up to 20 years imprisonment for torture not resulting in death.

As for the videotapes, US Code 18 §1519 mandates similar punishment for one who “knowingly alters, destroys, mutilates, conceals, covers up, falsifies, or makes a false entry in any record, document, or tangible object with the intent to impede, obstruct, or influence the investigation or proper administration of any matter within the jurisdiction of any department or agency of the United States ...”

I can't seem to find the parts of those code sections where the perpetrator is to be promoted to the top position in the Central Intelligence Agency.

Maybe Haspel was "small fry." Perhaps she only oversaw torture of one person in one place. Perhaps drafting that cable ordering the evidence destroyed was just a coincidental assignment.

But not having caught the bigger fish yet is no excuse for throwing this one back, let alone promoting her to head the very organization under whose auspices she committed her crimes.