

A federal judge has ordered the Justice Department to release memos letting the CIA use waterboarding and other harsh interrogation techniques on terror suspects, or justify why these should be kept classified.

The Times report identified two memos penned by the OLC in 2005. One authorized the use of methods such as waterboarding, head slapping and exposure to freezing temperatures during interrogations. The second said the CIA did not violate federal law on prisoner interrogations; it was issued just as Congress was about to pass a bill declaring "inhumane treatment" of prisoners unlawful.

"It is essential that these memos immediately be released to the public so that high level officials can be held accountable for authorizing torture as policy in violation of U.S. and international law," ACLU attorney Amrit Singh said in a news release.

CIA Director Michael Hayden revealed late last year that his agency had destroyed videotapes of the harsh interrogations of two terror suspects because the tapes allegedly would have exposed agency officials "and their families to retaliation from al-Qaeda and its sympathizers."

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