



Hugh's News

Disappearing children

In Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 suspense thriller, "The Man Who Knew Too Much," assassins kidnapped Jimmy Stewart's son to pressure Stewart not to talk to the authorities. Imagine something more heinous, like government authorities kidnapping children in order to pressure their father to confess to crimes.

On March 9, 2003, a story in the respected *London Sunday Telegraph* was titled, "CIA holds young sons of captured al-Qa'eda chief." The story by Olga Craig said, "Two young sons of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the suspected mastermind of the September 11 attacks, are being held by the CIA to force their father to talk. Yousef al-Khalid, nine, and his brother Abed al-Khalid, seven, were taken into custody in Pakistan ... but this weekend they were flown to America where they will be questioned about their father. CIA interrogators confirmed ... that the boys were being encouraged to talk about their father's activities.

The story said their father, Mohammed, 37, was being held at the Bagram military base in Afghanistan where he had been told his sons were being held, to encourage him to divulge future attacks and the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden.

In the years since the children were kidnapped, little more has been revealed. Only some retrospective information about them appeared when the Center for Constitutional Rights published an affidavit of Ali Khan. Khan quoted his son, saying, "The Pakistani guards told my son

that the boys were kept in a separate area upstairs, and were denied food and water by other guards. They were also mentally tortured by having ants or other creatures put on their legs to scare them and get them to say where their father was hiding."

In summer *The New York Times* said Mohammed had been taken to a CIA black site in Poland where, "various harsh techniques, including waterboarding, used about 100 times over a period of two weeks — prompted worries that officers might have crossed the boundary into illegal torture."

"Let's just say we are not averse to a little smacky face," an informed CIA official told the *Telegraph*. "After all, if you don't violate a prisoner's human rights some of the time then you aren't doing your job."

Not surprisingly, Mohammed confessed to nearly every terrorist plot during the past 15 years. Mohammed is currently at Guantanamo awaiting a military tribunal.

The U.S. media have not publicized the fate of the children. We know that a state-controlled press would likely conceal such things, but does our own press meet that description?

The methods used to convict Mohammed go against every standard of human decency. Are there any limits to what we will do in this the war against an abstract noun, the so-called "War on Terror?" Might we even justify, say, gouging out the eyes of a suspected terrorist's child to "forestall an imminent threat?"