Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights

Trevor Paglen, AC Thompson

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"We don't kick the shit out of them. We send them to other countries so that they can kick the shit out of them."-A U.S. official involved in CIA renditions

It's no longer a secret: Since 9/11, the CIA has quietly kidnapped more than a hundred people and detained them at prisons throughout the world. It is called "extraordinary rendition," and it is part of the largest U.S. clandestine operation since the end of the Cold War.

Some detainees have been taken to Egypt and Morocco to be tortured and interrogated. Others have been transported to secret CIA-run facilities in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan, where they, too, have been tortured. Many of the kidnapped detainees have ended up at the U.S. detention camp at Guantánamo, but others have been disappeared entirely.

In this first book to systematically investigate extraordinary rendition, an award-winning investigative journalist and a "military geographer" explore the CIA program in a series of journeys that takes them around the world. They travel to suburban Massachusetts to profile a CIA front company that supplies the agency with airplanes; to Smithfield, North Carolina, to meet pilots who fly CIA aircraft; to the San Francisco suburbs to study with a "planespotter" who tracks the CIA's movements; and to Afghanistan, where the authors visit the notorious "Salt Pit" prison and meet released Afghan detainees.

They find that nearly five years after 9/11, the kidnappings have not stopped. On the contrary, the rendition program has been formalized, colluding with the military when necessary, and constantly changing its cover to remain hidden from sight.

Trevor Paglen is an expert on clandestine military installations. A widely exhibited artist and photographer, he is the author of the two-volume study *Secret Bases, Secret Wars.*

A.C. Thompson, winner of a 2005 George Polk Award, is a staff writer at the S.F. Weekly. He is a two-time winner of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's PASS Award for crime reporting, and twice the recipient of the Western Publication Association's Maggie Award.

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