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Interrogating the Enemy

The Story of the CIA's Interrogation of Top al-Qa'ida Terrorists

(Working Title)

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With Bill Harlow

1 and still remain inside the fence. It was raining hard and I didn't have an umbrella.
2 When I got inside the main building I was a wet mess. I wandered around until I found
3 the room designated on my paper work. Since I had not expected to hike a half-mile in
4 the rain and then wander around in a maze with confusing room numbers to get to
5 where I needed to be, I was about 15 minutes late.

6

7 When I entered the room, there was a panel of five or six people sitting at a long table
8 facing a single chair. I introduced myself and sat down, apologizing for being late. They
9 said it was understandable given the weather and we made a little small talk about my
10 drive up. Eventually the man in the center of the group asked me, "What made you ap-
11 ply for a job at CIA?"

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13 "I didn't apply for a job."

14

15 "You don't want to work for CIA? You didn't put in a job application?"

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17 "No. I never approached you guys. I'm going to get out of the Air Force in a few months
18 and I want to do some contracting, but I want to start my own business."

19

20 "Then, why did you come?"

21

22 "Good question," I said. "You guys called me and I was curious about why you did that."

23

1 Jose asked how long I thought it would take to know whether a detainee exposed to
2 these techniques would be willing to cooperate or would “take his secrets to the grave.”
3 I told him thirty days. In my mind that was the upper limit. I fully expected it would take a
4 lot less time than that for hard-case high-value detainees initially intent on withholding
5 information to begin engaging with interrogators and debriefers in ways that allowed a
6 switch to “social influence” based approaches. Social influence tactics are defined as
7 “non-coercive techniques, devices, procedures and manipulations a person or a group
8 can use to change the thoughts, feelings and actions of another individual or group.”

9
10 In that meeting I described some of the techniques that were in use for SERE training,
11 but the topic of waterboarding had not come up. In fact, I didn’t think of waterboarding
12 until later that night back in my hotel room. I was mulling over the different SERE tech-
13 niques, making a short list of the ones I thought were most effective when it dawned on
14 me that I had left waterboarding, the most effective SERE technique I knew of, off the
15 list I discussed with Rodriguez earlier that day.

16
17 As senior SERE psychologists, Bruce Jessen and I had spent several years trying to get
18 the Navy SERE School to abandon its use of waterboarding, not because it didn’t work
19 but because we thought it was *too* effective. One-hundred percent of the warfighters
20 exposed to it in training capitulated, even if it cost them their jobs. In my view, water-
21 boarding students did the enemy’s job for them. The point of resistance training is to
22 teach students that they can protect secrets. But my personal experience interviewing
23 POWs and warfighters who had been waterboarded at the Navy SERE School is that