

Military Interrogations: Best Practices and Beliefs

by **Matthew D. Semel**

Abstract

This study was designed to address some of the gaps in knowledge about interrogations conducted by military interrogators and provide information about methods from their perspectives, based on their experiences. Kassin et al. (2007) conducted the first self-report survey of best interrogation practices and beliefs of law enforcement officers. This study followed that model, using a different population from which to obtain the sample: military interrogators. Like Kassin's study, this survey asked participants to address and self-report on a number of issues, some in common with law enforcement and others that apply specifically to military interrogations. Participants were asked to estimate, rate and self-report on seven facets of their work. (Like the law enforcement study, the goal here was to obtain common practices, observations, and beliefs about interrogations directly from military interrogators). Subsequent research can test the interrogation methods that the subjects of this study believe are the most effective and focus on practices and beliefs unique to the military context. This study empirically supports, for the first time, the hypothesis that experienced interrogators favor rapport-building approaches over all other available techniques.

Introduction

In the twelve years since the attacks of 11 September 2001, methods employed by the United States to procure intelligence from human subjects have undergone increased focus and debate. The process of obtaining intelligence from captured subjects is known in the military as human intelligence collection or HUMINT and the practice has undergone unprecedented attention and review. [1] While there is self-reported, official, and anecdotal evidence of practices and procedures approved for use and allegations about techniques actually used, it is difficult to separate fact from fiction. What is clear, however, is that there appears to be no published empirical support for any of the interrogation practices officially approved by the United States military for personnel who interrogate prisoners of war or suspected insurgents and terrorists.

As a result of this focus, the United States and some of its most important allies have debated the use of torture and its effectiveness. This debate has obscured more important empirical questions about counterterrorism interrogations. What do military interrogators believe are the best practices when questioning suspected or confirmed terrorists? Do the current methods put in place by the Army succeed in extracting accurate and truthful information? Do these methods work quickly? Do military interrogators operate with some of the same misconceptions held by

law enforcement interrogators? The literature on law enforcement interrogations has established, for example, that police interrogators are overly confident in their ability to detect deception but are correct at rates slightly better than chance. [2] Training appears to have a negligible effect on detecting deception [3] but increases confidence in the ability to do so. [4] Do military interrogators also overestimate their ability to determine if a subject is lying or engaging in deceit?

Social scientists have studied law enforcement techniques for a number of years and a large body of literature exists on this subject. The law enforcement literature has dispelled many myths about police interrogation techniques and highlighted more reliable and efficacious practices.

The goal of military interrogations can differ from those in law enforcement. Military interrogators generally look to gather information about future events or to plan future military operations; law enforcement interrogators usually seek to elicit a confession from a suspect about a past crime and to gather evidence about this crime. However, military interrogation techniques are based in part on a law enforcement model and personnel may be subject to the same myths that affect police interrogators.

Most of the existing literature about interrogations in a military context supports five overall principles: the stresses of war and capture generally have a negative effect on a prisoner's ability to provide truthful and accurate statements to his/her interlocutor; both the conditions of confinement and the application of psychological pressures, such as isolation or sensory deprivation, negatively affect a prisoner's ability to provide accurate and actionable intelligence; rapport building, while often time consuming, is the best technique for extracting accurate intelligence from a prisoner; and, historically, many individual interrogators, including the participants in this study, generally claim that rapport building is the best approach for eliciting accurate intelligence from a prisoner, if a direct approach fails. Most military interrogators assert that there is no "magic bullet" that quickly induces compliance and cooperation in every interrogation subject.

Police investigators routinely interrogate people suspected of committing crimes. There is a large body of literature examining procedures used by law enforcement, the perspectives of investigators conducting an interrogation, (for example confidence that the person they are interrogating is the perpetrator), [5], experienced police officers' inability to detect truth from non-truth [6] [7] [8], the fact that training increases confidence but not ability to detect deception [9] and the psychology and state of mind of the person under interrogation. [10] A great body of literature also exists on the impact of "confession" evidence on prosecutors, judges, and juries. [11] It has been further shown that as the coerciveness of an interrogation increases, there is a greater likelihood of inducing a false confession. [12] [13] [14] Traditionally, sources for studying police interrogation techniques and confessions have included both archival and real-life material and experiments. [15] [16]

A body of descriptive literature exists, chronicling the experiences of military interrogators and some of the techniques they have employed over the course of a number of conflicts. In addition, official manuals used by military intelligence officers are widely available both from on-line booksellers and general sites on the Internet. Journalists [17] and human rights groups [18] have also reported extensively about military interrogations and have described practices sanctioned by the military as well as methods that the U.S. military has not officially approved. This does not mean that all official techniques are known or are available from open sources and official policy may allow the military's special forces to employ techniques that have not been publicly exposed.

A Study of Military Interrogators

Kassin [19] conducted the first self-report survey of best interrogation practices and beliefs of law enforcement officers. This study followed a similar model, using a different population from which to obtain a sample: military interrogators. Kassin's survey [20] was adopted and modified to conform to the specific strategies employed by military interrogators, as described in the Human Intelligence Collector Operations Field Manual. [21] The participants were asked to estimate, rate and self-report on seven facets of their work: (1) their ability to detect truth or deception; (2) their own opinions and practices with regard to 21 of the general approach techniques authorized by the Field Manual; (3) the importance of rapport building to extract information from a subject; (4) the applicability of law enforcement techniques to interrogations of terrorists; (5) the frequency, length and timing of interrogations; (6) training, and (7) their observations, if any, of others using torture or unapproved techniques during interrogations and, if so, with what frequency. Like the law enforcement study, the goal here was to obtain common practices, observations, and beliefs about interrogations directly from military interrogators. Subsequent research can test the interrogation methods that the subjects of this study believe are the most effective and focus on practices and beliefs unique to the military context. This study sheds additional light on interrogation practices currently in use by the United States military. This study also empirically supports, for the first time, the hypothesis that experienced interrogators favor rapport-building approaches over all other available techniques except the direct approach, asking an interrogation subject direct questions.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 132 United States military interrogators, from the Army, Air Force and Marines. Six participants identified themselves as members of a Joint Terrorism Task

Force (JTTF). The breakdown of subjects based on demographic variables is presented in Table 1. Subjects were recruited in a variety of ways. Many participants were guided to the study, posted on *SurveyMonkey*, by known contacts in the United States military. Other subjects were recruited through the social networking site, *Linked In* or by the principal investigator. Interrogators anonymously and individually entered the survey using a password provided by the contacts or the principal investigator. The survey took approximately twenty minutes to complete and participants were assured that the survey collected no identifying data. The survey did not save Internet Protocol (IP) addresses.

The Questionnaire

The survey instrument used here was adapted from the one used by Kassin and his colleagues [22] in their national investigators' study (see Appendix A). Some of the questions were taken directly from that survey instrument with slight modifications and others were redesigned to meet the needs of this study's sample. The initial three questions on the survey here collected demographic information.

The next series of questions, four through seven, asked interrogators to provide information about admissions from interrogation subjects. These questions were constructed to provide a context for the question about deception detection. In addition, the questions sought to measure the degree to which military interrogators assume that the subject of an interrogation was actually involved in terrorist activities.

Questions eight through eleven sought to elicit basic information about interrogations in the military context. This series of questions was designed to further develop the knowledge base about interrogations in this context. For example, Question nine asked about the average number of times a particular interrogation subject is interrogated. Question ten asked interrogators to estimate the average length of an interrogation in hours.

Question thirteen asked interrogators to self-rate their ability to detect deception. The law enforcement literature has established that law enforcement officers are overconfident in the ability to detect deception in an interrogation subject. This overconfidence can affect the tenor of an interrogation and imperil suspects who are actually innocent. This study hypothesized that military interrogators are also overconfident in their ability to detect deception and question thirteen was included to measure the confidence levels of this study's participants.

Questions fourteen through seventeen were again included to expand the empirical knowledge base about military interrogations. For example, question seventeen asked military interrogators if their units regularly record interrogations. Gudjonsson [23] and Kassin [24] have long advocated that, in the interest of justice for all parties, law enforcement interrogations, in their

entirety, should be videotaped. At the time of the survey's creation, it was unknown whether or not military interrogators regularly videotaped the interrogations that they conducted.

Question eighteen was a multi-part question. This question tracked interrogation approaches described in the *Army Human Intelligence Collector Operations Field Manual* [25]. Section 8-20 of this Field Manual [26] lists specific approaches that military interrogators should use when attempting to induce cooperation in an interrogation subject. Question eighteen asked interrogators to self-rate these interrogation approaches as well as others commonly used by law enforcement on a 1(= never) to 5 (= always) scale. One of the central hypotheses of this study was that military interrogators believe building rapport with an interrogation subject is the best way to gather accurate intelligence. Question 18P specifically addressed this hypothesis.

Other parts of Question 18 were created based on information reported by journalists. For example, Q18U asked study subjects if they limited the sight of the people they questioned. This part of question eighteen reflected widespread news reports that intelligence interrogators regularly limited the senses of interrogation subjects. [27] Photos have also depicted this practice. [28]

Results

As indicated, the first series of questions on the survey collected demographic data. Table 1 presents frequencies and percentages for demographic variables. The next set of questions, 5, 6, 7 and 8, asked for specific information about the interrogation of terrorists. Question 5 asked, over the course of your career in the military about how many subjects involved in terrorism or who have knowledge about terrorist activities have you conducted, alone or with other interrogators. Answers ranged from zero to one thousand. It is unlikely that one interrogator questioned one thousand people who were involved in terrorism or had knowledge of terrorist activities. It is more likely that this respondent was referring to the number of interrogation subjects in general he interrogated during his twenty-two year military career.

Table 1: *Frequencies and Percentages for Demographic Variables (N=132)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	104	84.6
Female	19	15.4
Status		
Active duty	27	25.2
Reserve	19	17.8
Retired	55	51.4
JTTF	6	5.6
Branch		
Army	103	83.1
Air Force	5	4.0
Marines	16	12.9

For those eleven survey respondents who answered zero in response to Question 5, this answer is deceptive. It is likely that these respondents interrogated subjects who might be characterized as insurgents, detainees, enemy prisoners of war (EPWs), irregular forces or members of a foreign military force even if they did not interrogate anyone they believed to be a terrorist. In future surveys, the focus on terrorism should be eliminated.

Questions 9 through 12 and 14 and 15 collected data about the characteristics of the interrogation process. For example, Question 9 asked, in your own experience what would you say is the average number of times an individual subject is interrogated. Almost 32% of the survey respondents said the average number of interrogations of one individual was three. Almost 24% answered that individual subjects were interrogated an average of ten or more times, the next biggest group. Fifty subjects skipped this question.

Question 11 asked what is the longest interrogation you were involved and answers ranged from two hours to one month.

Question 10 inquired about the average length of an interrogation. Of the 73 respondents who answered this question, most put the length of the interrogation between two and three hours. The time ranged from a half hour to five hours. Table 2 includes descriptive statistics for interrogation measures.

Deception Detection

Question 13 reads how skilled are you at knowing if a subject who denies involvement in, or knowledge of, terrorist activities during an interrogation is telling the truth or lying. Sixteen respondents out of the seventy-two who answered said they had a deception detection rate of 85% or better. The most frequent answer was an 80% confidence rate; twelve respondents provided this answer. The lowest rate of confidence was 10% and one respondent wrote that truth or lying cannot be “judged;” the highest level of confidence was 100%. Fifty-five of the seventy-two respondents who answered this question rated their confidence level at above 50%. The mean score was 70.98% and the standard deviation was 19.841. About 60% of the respondents reported that they knew when a “subject who denies involvement in or knowledge of terrorist activities during an interrogation is telling the truth or lying” 75% or more of the time.

Special Training, Videotaping and Language Skills

Question 14 asked the subjects if they had received special training about how to conduct interrogations. Twenty-eight of the sixty-eight people who responded in the affirmative had taken the Reid course on interrogations and interviewing. (Thousands of law enforcement officers have been trained in the Reid Technique despite the doubts experts have about its value.) [29] Two respondents had done some interrogation training with the Israelis and several had participated in a British interrogation course. Seven or 9.3% of the sixty-eight respondents said they had not received special training.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics for Interrogation Measures*

Variable	N	Range	Mean	SD
Number of interrogations	88	0 to 5000	300.13	691.24
Percentage of all subjects who:				
Admitted full involvement	76	0 to 95	16.39	23.88
Admitted partial involvement	76	0 to 175	34.93	32.95
Did not admit any involvement	76	0 to 200	42.68	36.57
Percentage of subjects involved in terrorist activities who:				
Admitted full involvement	48	0 to 90	16.00	25.57
Admitted partial involvement	48	0 to 95	29.92	31.25
Did not admit any involvement	48	0 to 100	38.02	34.58
Percentage of subjects not involved in terrorist activities who:				
Admitted full involvement	47	0 to 100	4.79	18.69
Admitted partial involvement	46	0 to 100	14.17	25.29
Did not admit any involvement	47	0 to 100	51.43	42.56
Interrogations per suspect	82	1 to 10	5.40	2.82
Hours per suspect	59	0 to 12	2.22	1.68
Longest interrogation (hours)	57	0 to 72	9.56	12.69
Percentage correctly identified truth or lie	56	0 to 100	67.16	22.62

Question 15 asked if the subjects' units videotaped interrogations. Experts in the United States have long advocated that law enforcement interrogations should be recorded. Among the seventy respondents who answered this question, there was almost an even split: 54.3% reported that interrogations were videotaped and 50% said they were not. In some cases the written responses were contradictory. For example, one subject reported that as of 2009, there was no army-wide videotaping. This subject, a male with twenty-seven years of service remarked that no "good" interrogators would avoid having the interrogation taped. Another respondent, a twenty-five year Army veteran, said that interrogations were taped for a number of purposes, including training and in case of claims of abuse. In most cases, when interrogations were taped, the tapes were destroyed after a short period of time. One person answered that this information was classified.

Question 16 asked if the interrogators were fluent in a language other than English. Of the seventy-six respondents who answered this question, fifty-three or 69.7% answered in the affirmative. Languages included Arabic, Serbo-Croatian, German, Tagalog, Russian, Spanish, French and Vietnamese. Fourteen subjects described themselves as fluent in Arabic. A retired four-year Army veteran noted that at one time interrogators were required to attend the Defense Language Institute in Monterey California for language training but this requirement had been eliminated. Another subject indicated that he could conduct a screening in Arabic but relied on his interpreter “95%” for interrogations. When asked in Question 17 about the use of an interpreter, thirty-six subjects, 50% of the sample who answered this question, stated that they always used an interpreter during an interrogation.

Self-Rating Approaches Advocated by the Field Manual

Question 18 was a multi-part question that asked interrogators to self-rate different approach techniques that are described in the *Human Intelligence Collector Operations Field Manual*. [30] The question lists twenty-one approach techniques: those methods designed to encourage an interrogation subject to speak to his or her interlocutor. Seventy study participants answered at least part of this question. The top three methods for getting an interrogation subject to talk were rapport building, Q18P, identifying contradictions in an interrogation subject’s story, Q18D, and appealing to the interrogation subject’s self interest, Q18K. Fifty-two interrogators, 75.4% of the study participants who answered this question, indicated that they always tried to build rapport with the subject of an interrogation and gain his or her trust. The range of scores for rapport building was two to four and the mean score was 3.80. The standard deviation was .443. Of all the respondents who answered this question, 98% used the technique of building rapport and gaining trust often or always. Table 3 provides descriptive statistics for interrogation measures.

The emotional love approach, advocated in the Army Field Manual [31], also garnered support based on responses to Question 18M. Forty-one interrogators, 59.4% of those that answered this question, used this approach often. This approach was also discussed by interrogators in Questions 20 and 21 and will be addressed further below. Ten interrogators always used this approach during an interrogation. This means that 73.9% of the subjects who answered this question use this approach often or always. Scores ranged from two to four and the mean score for this question was 2.97. The standard deviation was .610.

A number of practices that are used in fictionalized accounts of interrogations were disfavored by a majority of the interrogators who answered this question. 48 subjects, 70.6% of the total, said they never physically intimidated an interrogation subject. Fifty-four interrogators, 78.3%, said they never limited the interrogation subject’s sense of sight. Forty-seven interrogators said they never threw objects in the interrogation booth or room, 67.1% of the total who answered this question. On the question’s five-point scale, the technique with the highest average score was

building rapport, with a mean score of 4.74. Ten interrogators said that they always used this approach.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics for Interrogation Methods*

Variable	N	Range	Mean	SD
Isolating subject from family and friends	75	1 to 5	3.77	1.36
Isolating subject from other prisoners	78	1 to 5	3.35	1.19
Confronting subject with evidence of involvement in terrorist acts	76	1 to 5	3.64	0.92
Identifying contradictions in subject's story	78	1 to 5	4.31	0.80
Interrupting subject's denials and objections	76	1 to 5	3.53	1.01
Physically intimidating the subject	77	1 to 4	1.44	0.80
Conducting the interrogation with more than one interrogator	77	1 to 5	2.83	0.89
Pretending to have independent evidence of terrorist involvement	75	1 to 5	2.95	0.99
Yelling at subject	78	1 to 5	2.14	0.86
Throwing physical objects in interrogation room	79	1 to 5	1.46	0.75
Appealing to subject's self-interests	79	1 to 5	4.04	0.79
Appealing to subject's religion or conscience	78	1 to 5	3.41	0.92
Appealing to subject's love of family, comrades, or homeland	78	1 to 5	3.87	0.73
Appealing to subject's negative feelings toward his group/leaders	78	1 to 5	3.27	0.88
Convincing subject he has nothing to fear by cooperating	79	1 to 5	3.80	0.97
Establishing rapport and gaining subject's trust	78	1 to 5	4.72	0.48
Expressing impatience, anger, or frustration at subject	77	1 to 5	2.51	0.82
Showing subject photographs of victims of terrorist attacks	75	1 to 5	1.91	0.98
Convincing subject that resistance to questioning is futile	78	1 to 5	2.78	1.19
Promising subject something of value in return for cooperation	78	1 to 5	2.78	1.18
Limiting subject's sense of sight	78	1 to 3	1.32	0.63

Note: Higher scores indicate more frequent use of method.

Use of Prohibited Approaches

Question 19 asked if interrogators had ever observed interrogators using techniques prohibited by the Army Field Manual. [32] Of the seventy-one subjects who answered this question, fifty-seven or 69.5% said they had never observed this. Seventeen or 20.7% of those who answered said that they had seen this on “rare occasions”. Seven respondents, 8.5% said they observed interrogators using prohibited techniques sometimes. One respondent said that he observed interrogators often use techniques prohibited by the Field Manual. No one answered always.

Questions 20 and 21 were opened ended questions designed to allow interrogators to comment in a more expansive way about techniques. Question 20 generated the lowest response rate of all the questions in the survey. Only fifty study subjects answered this question. Question 20 asked interrogators to describe any effective interrogation techniques that were not included in Question 18. This question was somewhat ambiguous and this is reflected in some of the comments. This survey gathered data about approach techniques: those methods that induce an interrogation subject to cooperate. The interrogation, or interview as described by some, itself comes after using a successful approach technique or techniques. As a result of the ambiguity of the question, answers varied. One subject number responded that he had seen interrogators crossing the line but “that was steadily and effectively fixed in the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandals, at least within the military.”

In answering Question 20, almost all the respondents took the opportunity to list approach techniques that they believed were the most efficacious and answers varied widely. For example, several subjects emphasized that rapport building is an essential approach technique.

A number of subjects advocated the direct approach, or asking an interrogation subject straightforward questions. One respondent said that this works “95% of the time. Another study subject argued, “The most effective technique has always been direct questioning.” This study subject, a retired Army male with over four years experience added, “If the interrogator, interpreter (sic) and subject are all laughing together information is generally more reliable.” Another subject, a retired Marine with twenty eight years of experience, stated, “During the Vietnam War, the most effective means of obtaining information was through the Direct Approach.” A male, twenty-seven year veteran of the Army, endorsed the direct approach for enemy prisoners of war. This subject added that “for Islamic terrorists, trickery and ruse. Absolutely the best and quickest way to get information from a genuine high-value target.” Many of the respondents specifically decried torture.

An active duty Army male with nineteen years of experience emphasized that information, not a confession, was the goal of the interrogation. This subject noted “If the bad guy does not want to admit he is bad but wants to share reliable information in order to try and convince me he is a good guy then it would be foolish of me to focus on his guilt.”

One subject, a male Army veteran who left Army service after four years, listed sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation, the “control slap,” stress positions and shackling as effective techniques. This respondent acknowledged that with an “inexperienced” and “uneducated” interrogator these techniques could quickly “get out of hand,” but further commented that it was “bull shit” that these methods are “prohibited army wide.” He stated that these approaches “have their time and place and should be allowed by experienced, well-trained, skilled collectors.” This was the only subject, number 110, who advocated techniques specifically prohibited by the *Army Human Intelligence Collector Operations Field Manual*. [33]

Question 21 generated similar types of responses. It asked what three techniques do you believe are the most effective to gather actionable intelligence. Again, subject number 110 was the only subject, out of the sixty-nine who answered this question, to advocate techniques forbidden by the *Army Human Intelligence Collector Field Manual*. [34] This subject wrote that “limiting the approaches an interrogator can use in the name of humanity or any other PC consideration is complete horseshit. I’m not saying we should beat every detainee, but what I am saying is sometimes the only breaking point for a detainee is a restricted approach.”

One subject recommended sleep deprivation as an effective tool to break an interrogation subject and win his compliance. This study subject was an Army reservist with just over fourteen years of experience. The answer was given without any further elaboration about the use of sleep deprivation. It should be noted that the *Army Human Intelligence Collector Field Manual* [35] allows for limiting detainees’ sleep to four hours in a twenty-four hour period, a practice that some prominent interrogators believe constitutes inhumane treatment, if not torture.

Twenty-one subjects, out of seventy-nine, recommended a specific approach contained in the *Army Human Intelligence Collector Field Manual* [36]: the emotional love approach. The Field Manual states that to be successful with this approach, the interrogator must “focus on the anxiety felt by the source about the circumstances in which he finds himself.” [37] The interrogator further works to exploit the love that the interview subject feels for family, country or comrades. One study subject, however, a seven year Army reservist, dismissed the emotional love approach as worthless and only practiced by what he described as “poor” interrogators.

Twenty-six study subjects advocated a rapport-building approach to interrogations, sometimes in combination with other strategies. An Army reservist with seven years of experience wrote, “Rapport building, which takes a lot of time, will work with [al]most any subject.” A twenty-six year Air Force reservist, recommended “establishing trust and rapport through displays of cultural finesses and the appearance of genuine concern for the detainee’s interests.” An active duty male with nineteen years of experience, wrote, “[B]asic rapport building is the most effective. This is in part because many of the ‘hardened terrorists’ we capture expect physical and verbal abuse. When we offer a cup of tea instead it takes them out of their comfort zone.”

Discussion

Rapport-Building

One of the central premises of this study was that military interrogators believed that building rapport with an interrogation subject is the best way to induce cooperation and gather accurate intelligence from that subject. This premise was supported by the data. This may have been a self-fulfilling prophecy driven by this particular sample but the overwhelming support for rapport building suggests otherwise. When recruiting a sample, the principal investigator contacted a number of interrogators who were outspoken in their support of rapport building as a primary interrogation technique. A number of these contacts helped recruit subjects for the study. It is possible that these contacts associated themselves with like-minded interrogators who tended to eschew more coercive interrogation techniques. The sample is not large or diverse enough to generalize this finding to all military interrogators but there is reason to be cautiously optimistic. The fact is that this sample used rapport building more than any other technique or approach, with perhaps the exception of the direct approach, which is also non-coercive.

In light of the controversy over the use of coercive interrogation techniques, this finding is perhaps the most important in the study. One of the striking things about the national discussion about this issue after September 11th was the fact that interrogators themselves appeared to be shut out of the conversation. According to internal administration documents, the Bush Administration's internal debates did not include experienced interrogators [38]; initial support for coercive techniques came from officials with little knowledge of the day-to-day challenges faced by interrogators in the field. This study does provide empirical support for the idea that, among experienced interrogators, rapport building is best for generating cooperation from an interrogation subject and the gathering of accurate information. All but one of the respondents in this study rejected coercive techniques and those prohibited by the *Army's Human Intelligence Collector Operations Field Manual* [39].

Because interrogators who actively spoke out against coercive techniques recruited the bulk of the sample, it is likely that the sample suffered from selection bias. This is especially true in light of numerous reports that many U.S. military interrogators were prepared to use coercive techniques and in fact did. [40]

One theory, which informed this study, was that military interrogators regularly confront interrogation subjects with false information to "break" them. Law enforcement interrogators also use this tactic and Kassin [41] described this practice as implying or pretending to have independent evidence of guilt. That study found that this technique was rated 9th out of the 16 techniques rated. [42]

An additional theory upon which this study was based held the following: military interrogators believe that disorienting an interrogation subject through sensory deprivation will break that subject and lead to accurate and actionable intelligence. This general hypothesis was prompted by news reports that showed goggled and hooded detainees being transported to and from detention facilities. Sensory deprivation was also an interrogation technique advocated by the Bush Administration. [43] This practice was not favored by the sample here. In fact, one source argued that actual use of these forms of sensory deprivation was limited to certain high value detainee facilities, Special Forces facilities and “the facilities of a few errant big Army units.” In actuality, combat units hooded detainees to prevent them from seeing where they were going, who was with them and to prevent them from speaking to each other. According to this source, hooding and sensory deprivation were not used as interrogation tactics and were not favored by military police, who helped operate detention facilities.

Deception Detection

Like their law enforcement counterparts, study participants here displayed overconfidence in their ability to detect deception in an interrogation subject. Given what is known about law enforcement officers and their ability to detect deception, [44] this is a potentially troubling finding. More research is needed to further examine this issue. Hypothetically, military interrogators may be better at detecting deception than their law enforcement colleagues. If this is the case, military training and field experience may have positive effects on an interrogator’s ability to detect deception. It is also possible that there is something characteristically different about people who choose to become interrogators in the military that accounts for higher than average abilities to tell the truth from falsehood, if these abilities even exist. This is fertile ground for experimental research that would be of great benefit to the United States military.

No Silver Bullets

Many experienced interrogators have argued that the subject being questioned can influence the tenor of an interrogation. The study sample here believed that when it comes to interrogations, “one size does not fit all.” This idea was also supported by some of the narrative data. For example, one interrogator wrote in response to Question 20, “There is no ‘silver bullet,’ the reason why we have an array of approaches is because everyone’s breaking point is different.” Another offered, “Each interrogation is different. That’s why there are different techniques employed.” In response to Question 21, an interrogator stated that the techniques used depended on the “individual detainee.”

Lack of Empirical Knowledge

There is so little cotemporary empirical knowledge about intelligence interrogations that the very existence of this study is a contribution to the literature. [45] As stated earlier, it appears that this study is the first of its kind. It is notable that the subjects of this study, as guarded and suspicious of outsiders as they may be, provided valuable and important data about a subject of significant importance to the security of the United States. Great efforts were made to secure a viable sample and the subjects who chose to participate in this study revealed rich details about the art and science of intelligence interrogations. This research project represents an important first step in a process that can lead to improvements in interrogation approaches. It is this researcher's hope that projects such as this will allow the men and women who collect human intelligence to use science as a catalyst for the most effective interrogation approaches possible. In this way, social scientists and the United States military can work together for the benefit of the intelligence community, soldiers in the battlefield and the safety of the country itself.

About the Author: **Mathew D. Semmel, J.D. PhD.** is Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at St. Thomas Aquinas College in Sparkill, New York. Dr. Semel earned his Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from the Graduate Center, City University of New York. He can be reached at <mds417@optonline.net>.

Notes

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Appendix A

Military Interrogators Survey

Gender: M F (circle/highlight one)

1. **How long have you/did you serve in the military or reserves?**

_____ years, _____ months

2. **Current Status:** Active Duty Reserves Retired (circle/highlight one)

3. **With what branch of the United States Military did you/do you serve?**

_____ Army

_____ Navy

_____ Marines

_____ Air force

4. **Over the course of your career in the military about how many interrogations of subjects involved in terrorism or who have knowledge of terrorist activities have you conducted alone or with other interrogators? Please estimate as best you can.**

5. **Considering all the interrogations in which you have been involved, approximately (please estimate as best you can) what percentage of *all* subjects:**

Admitted partial involvement in or knowledge of terrorist activities _____

Admitted full involvement in or knowledge of terrorist activities _____

Did not admit or concede anything _____

100%

6. **Considering all the interrogations in which you have been involved, approximately what percentage of subjects who were involved in terrorist activities:**

Admitted partial involvement in or knowledge of terrorist activities	_____
Admitted full involvement in terrorist activities	_____
Did not admit or concede anything	_____
	100%

7. **Considering all the interrogations in which you have been involved, approximately what percentage of subjects who turned out to be uninvolved in terrorist activities:**

Admitted partial involvement in or knowledge of terrorist activities	_____
Admitted full involvement in terrorist activities	_____
Did not admit or concede anything	_____
	100%

8. **In your own experience, what would you say is the average *number of times* an individual subject is interrogated?**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more

9. **In your own experience, what would you say is the average *length* of an interrogation?**

_____ (hours)

10. **What is the *longest* interrogation you were ever involved in?**

_____ (hours)

11. **As best you can, try to estimate the percentage of subject interrogations you were involved in that took place within each of the following time intervals"**

0800 to 1200 _____

1200 to 1600 _____

1600 to 2000 _____

2000 to 2400 _____

2400 to 0400 _____

0400 to 0800 _____

100%

12. **How skilled are you at knowing if a subject who denies involvement in or knowledge of terrorist activities during an interrogation is telling the truth or lying?**

_____ % correct

13. **About how often does your impression turn out to be right?**

_____ % correct

14. **Have you ever received special training (seminars, workshops, etc.) on how to conduct interrogations?**

_____ No

_____ Yes (please describe) _____

15. **Does your unit videotape interrogations?**

_____ No

_____ Yes _____ % of all interrogations are videotaped

16. **Are you fluent in a language other than English?**

_____ No

_____ Yes (please describe) _____

17. **Please estimate how often *you* use an interpreter during an interrogation. Circle a number on a 5-point scale (1= never, 2 = on rare occasion, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always).**

1 2 3 4 5

18. **Listed below are a number of interrogation techniques that are recommended and/or used interrogations. Please estimate how often *you* have used each technique. For each circle a number on a 5-point scale.**

(1 = never, 2 = rare occasion, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always).

A. *Isolating the subject from family and friends.*

1 2 3 4 5

B. *Isolating the subject from other prisoners.*

1 2 3 4 5

C. *Confronting the subject with evidence of involvement in terrorist activities.*

1 2 3 4 5

D. *Identifying contradictions in the subject's story*

1 2 3 4 5

E. *Interrupting the subject's denials and objections*

1 2 3 4 5

F. *Physically intimidating the subject*

1 2 3 4 5

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- G. *Conducting the interrogation with more than one interrogator*
1 2 3 4 5
- H. *Implying or pretending to have independent evidence of terrorist involvement*
1 2 3 4 5
- I. *Yelling at the subject*
1 2 3 4 5
- J. *Throwing physical objects in the interrogation booth*
1 2 3 4 5
- K. *Appealing to the subject's self-interests*
1 2 3 4 5
- L. *Appealing to the subject's religion or conscience*
1 2 3 4 5
- M. *Appealing to the subject's love of his family, comrades or homeland*
1 2 3 4 5
- N. *Appealing to the subject's negative feelings toward his group, soldiers or leaders*
1 2 3 4 5
- O. *Convincing the subject he has nothing to fear by cooperating*
1 2 3 4 5
- P. *Establishing rapport and gaining the subject's trust*
1 2 3 4 5
- Q. *Expressing impatience, anger, or frustration at the subject*
1 2 3 4 5
- R. *Showing the subject photographs of victims of terrorist attacks*
1 2 3 4 5
- S. *Convincing the subject that resistance to questioning is futile*
1 2 3 4 5
- T. *Promising the subject something of value in return for cooperation*
1 2 3 4 5
-

U. *Limiting the subject's sense of sight*

1 2 3 4 5

19. **Have you observed interrogators use techniques prohibited by the Army Field Manual?**

_____ No

_____ Yes. **If yes, with what frequency? (1 = never, 2 = rare occasion, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always).**

1 2 3 4 5

20. **If there are other techniques that you use and find effective that are *not* described in the previous question please describe these in the space below.**

21. **What three techniques do *you* believe are most effective at acquiring accurate actionable intelligence from an interrogation subject?**

22. **Did you ever use techniques during an interrogation that you later regretted using?**

_____ No.

_____ Yes. If yes, please describe below.

Thank you!