

The Bush administration issued a pair of secret memos to the CIA in 2003 and 2004 that explicitly endorsed the agency's use of waterboarding and other interrogation techniques against al-Qaeda suspects -- documents prompted by worries among intelligence officials about a possible backlash if details of the program became public.

The classified memos, which have not been previously disclosed, were requested by then-CIA Director George J. Tenet more than a year after the start of the secret interrogations, according to four administration and intelligence officials familiar with the documents.

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