



A former senior MI6 officer has criticised the torture and abuse of terror suspects and says the US response to the threat posed by al-Qaida has been exaggerated and counterproductive. Stinging criticism of the US is made in the Guardian by Nigel Inkster, assistant chief of MI6 until 2006.

In the article, which appeared originally in the International Institute for Strategic Studies journal *Survival*, Inkster and co-author Alexander Nicoll write: "It is surely not inspiring for radicalised people with the potential for violent action to see terrorists tried in ordinary criminal courts and sentenced to long prison terms." The authors, both senior IISS members, add: "But it surely is inspiring to them to see terrorists treated as a special class of prisoners to be held by the military, imprisoned without trial and tortured. This is the kind of treatment that makes jihadists believe that they can indeed be the fighters for a cause that they aspire to be."

Abandoning "ordinary standards of criminal justice" in terrorism cases can be counterproductive, they say. "On top of this, there is the argument that democratic values ... are the [west's] best advertisement. Departures from such values have damaged America's ... reputation."

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