

Dianne Feinstein set to move on CIA report

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By **BURGESS EVERETT** and **JOSH GERSTEIN** | 3/31/14 7:48 PM EDT Updated: 4/1/14 1:24 AM EDT

Sen. Dianne Feinstein is racing toward declassification of a long-awaited report which sharply criticizes the CIA's Bush-era interrogation policies and disputes the agency's claims that the tough tactics helped foil terrorist plots.

The Senate Intelligence Committee chairwoman said Monday that she plans to hold a committee vote Thursday to make public the key findings and summary of the full 6,300-page report, which the panel has been working on for five years.

The Senate investigation has raised tensions between the Central Intelligence Agency and Feinstein (D-Calif.), who has accused the CIA of interfering in her committee's probe into Bush-era detention and interrogation policies.

The report paints a picture of the CIA interrogation program as poorly managed, with senior officials inside and outside the agency often unaware of precisely what tactics were being used in interrogations and what intelligence was or wasn't being produced, current and former officials said.

That confusion led to inaccurate public claims about the success of the program, according to Senate intelligence committee member Mark Udall (D-Colo.).

"I strongly believe that the only way to correct the inaccurate information in the public record on this program is through the sunlight of declassification," he said at a public panel hearing in December.

Feinstein appears intent on moving to release the thrust of the report — with or without Republican support — during a closed-door meeting of the intelligence panel set for Thursday afternoon in the committee's secure Capitol Hill workspace. Ultimately, declassification of the report is up to the executive branch.

However, the White House has said President Barack Obama wants the findings released, though officials there have been careful not to endorse the Senate report and to insist that any dissenting Congressional views and the CIA's response should also be made public.

"I believe they will, hopefully quickly," Feinstein said of declassification in a brief interview.

This is all news to the committee's seven Republican members, who Feinstein does not need to vote for declassifying the report as long as the panel's eight Democratic Caucus members support her, as is expected.

"I don't know for sure what she's going to do. She hasn't told me yet," said Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.), the committee's top Republican, who said he was unaware of the Thursday vote. "It's no surprise it's coming. I fully expected her to do so at some point."

The committee voted to approve the massive final report in 2012, mostly along party lines. Since, Feinstein and her staff have been going back and forth with the CIA about details in the report that she says will reveal the "brutal" nature of the controversial intelligence programs.

A CIA spokesman said in December that the Senate report contained "significant errors." That remark angered several senators, who said the errors were minor and did not undermine the report's findings.

"I am outraged that the CIA continues to make misleading public statements about the committee's study of the CIA's interrogation program. There is only one instance in which the CIA pointed out a factual error in the study, a minor error that has been corrected," Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) said at the December hearing.

"Where the committee and the CIA differ, we differ on interpretation and on conclusions from an agreed-upon factual record. You can't publicly call our differences of opinion significant errors in press releases. It is misleading," he added.

E-mails published by POLITICO earlier this year suggest that the CIA had not conducted a comprehensive review of the interrogation program before the Senate ramped up its investigation soon after Obama took office.

“No one had reviewed systematically, the Interrogation Program prior to [the Senior Review Team’s] founding,” one agency official wrote in a March 2010 e-mail describing an internal CIA review which paralleled the Senate probe after it began in 2009.

Former officials and the e-mails obtained under the Freedom of Information Act indicate that the CIA’s internal review was cut off in early 2010 after the Justice Department reopened a criminal inquiry into deaths and injuries of detainees in CIA custody.

The internal review has triggered complaints and counter-complaints between the CIA and the Senate after Senate intelligence committee staffers obtained access to some review records as they examined CIA documents at a special facility set up for the Senate investigation and moved copies of those records to the committee’s offices on the Hill.

Earlier this year, the CIA’s inspector general referred to the Justice Department as a potential crime the CIA’s own search of the Senate-used computers at the facility following what officials there viewed as a possible security breach. The CIA’s acting general counsel also reported the Senate staffers removal of the documents as a potential crime.

It’s unclear when the CIA resumed its analysis of the interrogation program, but in May 2013, a White House photographer snapped a photo of CIA Director John Brennan chatting with Obama in a White House hallway. Brennan is carrying a binder labeled as the CIA’s response to the Senate study.

The CIA’s official response was sent to the Senate the following month, Feinstein said recently. However, she and other senators said the agency was slow to provide other information needed to complete the report, resulting in the report first approved in December 2012 being stuck in limbo until this month.

Authors:

- [Burgess Everett](mailto:beverett@politico.com) (beverett@politico.com | [@burgessev](https://twitter.com/burgessev))
- [Josh Gerstein](https://twitter.com/joshgerstein) ([@joshgerstein](https://twitter.com/joshgerstein))