

Wind Turbine Torture

By Curt Devlin

It is easy to forget just how essential sleep is to health and happiness; until of course, you yourself have been deprived of it for a night or two. Firsthand experience of sleep deprivation, even for a few days, is a powerful reminder of how mentally and physically debilitating it is. Even the ongoing disruption or restriction of sleep for a relatively short period of time can have devastating health consequences. Medical research has clearly shown that sleep is essential to human health and wellbeing. Prolonged sleep deprivation has been linked to memory loss, hallucination, weakened resistance to pain, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, impaired immune response, extreme anxiety, stress, clinical depression, and suicide. In the most extreme cases, animal experimentation suggests that lack of sleep can kill you.

Sleep deprivation has long been recognized as torture by the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the United Nations Convention against Torture (CAT), and the United States War Crimes Act. Depriving someone of proper sleep is torture, regardless of whether it is perpetrated by the CIA against suspected terrorists, OR by reckless planning authorities who permit the wind industry to site industrial-scale wind turbines in residential neighborhoods, or by noise pollution regulatory authorities and health authorities who ignore consistent reports of sleep deprivation from neighboring residents. When authorities deem developments “compliant” with regulations, or wind developers effect specious mitigations; they are inflicting torture. They are violating fundamental human rights.

Recently, the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee released what has come to be known as the Torture Report. It reveals that sleep deprivation was one of the frequently used CIA “enhanced interrogation” tactics. The use of prolonged sleep deprivation led Committee Chairman, Diane Feinstein to conclude “...that, under any common meaning of the term, CIA detainees were tortured.” She goes on to say “...that the conditions of confinement and the use of authorized and unauthorized interrogation and conditioning techniques were cruel, inhuman, and degrading.” The same can be said of the practice of siting industrial turbines too close to homes. Failure to take action to stop excessive noise pollution, or to enforce existing legal limits on “noise nuisance” whenever noise-induced sleep disturbance or deprivation is reported by wind turbine neighbors, hosts, or their families is full complicity with torture.

It is grimly ironic that the US Senate Committee condemns sleep deprivation as cruel and inhuman when used by the CIA interrogators on terror suspects, but blithely ignores it when imposed by wind developers and local authorities on ordinary, law-abiding citizens who pose no threat to anyone. The only threat they pose is to the income generated by taxpayer subsidies to unscrupulous wind developers.

Is it really fair to compare the torture of detainees to that of turbine neighbors? Consider that the detainees were forced to endure sleeplessness for a few days at a time on many occasions, but never more than a week. Wind turbine victims must endure this same deprivation for arbitrary periods of time whenever the wind is blowing, sometimes intermittently for decades. Often, their only hope of escape or reprieve from this torment is to flee their homes which no one will buy—despite the fact that they are not suspected of any crimes whatsoever. At least detainees were not forced to lie awake and watch their families suffer the same deprivation.

When the turbines were shut down during a winter storm with near hurricane-force winds, one young mother of infant twins living in Fairhaven, Massachusetts USA wrote “Isn't it crazy that in a weird twist it

takes a blizzard to give us peace. According to the power dash the beasts stopped at around 9PM.” Later on, she wrote, “I sleep ok in the basement but the babies still wake up randomly almost every night.” Most who are tortured by turbines will tell you that “the beast” can usually find them even when they are hiding in the cellar. Not only are people kept awake by the turbines, but they must endure headaches, nausea, dizziness, breathing difficulties, and in some cases uncontrollable anxiety and severe acute depression.

In one incident described in the Torture Report, an Afghani named Arsala Khan “...suffered disturbing hallucinations after 56 hours of standing sleep deprivation....” Afterwards, the CIA determined that he actually was not involved in any plans or activities to harm the U.S! The innocent victims tortured by the wind industry are in a position to know just how it feels to be tortured indiscriminately.

Publicly, the Bush administration and the CIA chose to describe their treatment of detainees as “enhanced interrogation.” The wind industry chooses to call its noise impact mere “annoyance” and refer to residents’ “concerns”. These euphemisms are carefully selected to conceal the ugly reality that sleep deprivation is torture, plain and simple. Such terms attempt to hide what is known to be—by any standard of human decency—utterly wrong and depraved. The Senate Intelligence Committee and others have begun to shine a spotlight on the CIA torture program; but the wind industry program of cruelty continues to operate with impunity, largely beyond the glare of public scrutiny.

When the US Senate Committee report placed the issue of torture front and center in the media, it prompted outrage among some journalists, who have used terms like ‘depravity,’ ‘harrowing,’ and ‘gruesome’ to describe the techniques used by the CIA. Yet the media has no outrage when prolonged sleep deprivation and cruelties are routinely visited on local neighborhoods throughout America and across the world. When the subject turns to wind turbines, all talk of human rights violations immediately goes silent.

Remarkably, and despite the condemnation of the Intelligence Committee and the outraged media reaction to it, public opinion polls consistently show that a majority of Americans still consider the CIA’s use of torture justified. Even those who disagree with this view, may be able to understand it. The rationale for torture is that it was necessary to prevent another 911; but what, then, is the rationale for torturing ordinary men, women, and children in their own homes on a nightly basis? What accounts for the almost universal apathy of government officials, mainstream media, and the general public, toward the victims of wind energy? It seems America is one nation, with liberty, and justice for all—except for those unlucky few, who can be tortured without any good cause at all. Our silence gives consent to continue.

Perhaps this silence about turbine victims can be partially explained by a monumental form of social denial. Psychologists have noted that when confronted with tacit complicity with torture, most people tend to diminish in their own minds the actual harm being inflicted. Terms like ‘enhanced interrogation’ and ‘annoyance’ encourage such forms of self-deception. However, this pervasive complicity with torture cannot be fully explained by denial alone. There is a far more ominous and compelling explanation supplied long ago by the experiments of Stanley Milgram.

In 1962, Milgram, a Harvard-trained psychologist, devised a set of experiments designed to explain why people are willing to accept and even participate in torture. Initially, Milgram thought it was a lack of moral fiber. Prior to conducting his experiments, Milgram believed that most Americans were morally

superior to those who were responsible for the torture and atrocities of the Holocaust. He predicted that most of his (American) subjects would reject the use of torture out of hand. Milgram also polled many of his fellow psychologists, who made similar predictions. Contrary to all expectations, however, Milgram's experiment actually proved that about two thirds of Americans were willing to administer torture by electroshock to innocent victims, even to the point of possible lethality, ***simply because they were told by someone in a position of perceived authority that it was necessary to do so.*** Contrary to the much beloved American mythology of rugged individualism and personal independence, Milgram has shown that most Americans are ***just as blindly obedient to authority as everyone else.***

Since that time, Milgram's experiment has been repeated dozens of times by him and other scientists, with subjects from different countries and cultures, but the results are always the same. About 65% of all subjects are willing to administer torture—even to the point of lethality—as long as someone in authority tells them it is necessary. Even when controls are added to identify potentially confounding factors, this result is highly repeatable. This shows that obedience to authority, even to the point of partaking in torture of innocent victims, is so deeply ingrained in human nature that it transcends language, culture, and moral outlook—it is a truly global phenomenon. The evidence for this is sadly pervasive.

People are willing to ignore, condone, and even participate in torturing detainees simply because they are told that it was necessary to protect America from new terrorist attacks. Similarly, people are willing to tolerate, approve, and contribute to the torture of their neighbors with the ill effects of wind turbines simply because they have been told by public officials, the media, or green zealots that it is necessary to “save the planet” from global climate change. There is ample evidence to show that torture is not an effective means of interrogation and that industrial wind turbines cannot stem climate change. No matter. Like subjects in Milgram's experiment, the public is being told by authority that “the experiment requires that you continue.”

In a position paper entitled [Leave No Marks: Enhanced Interrogation Techniques and the Risk of Criminality](#), Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and Human Rights First (HRF) have collaborated to publish a detailed condemnation of the CIA torture program, as well as the participation of physicians in these practices. Section 6 specifically details the physical harm and health consequences of forced sleep deprivation and interruption. It also delineates the criminal consequences for anyone who knowingly engages in it. Here it is pointed out that “the U.S. State Department has condemned Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey for using sleep deprivation as a form of torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.”

In case anyone is inclined to minimize sleep deprivation as mere annoyance, as the wind industry and its advocates would have you believe; *Leave No Marks* goes on to note that:

Even sleep restriction of four hours per night for less than a week can result in physical harm, including hypertension, cardiovascular disease, altered glucose tolerance and insulin resistance. Sleep deprivation can impair immune function and result in increased risk of infectious diseases. Further, chronic pain syndromes are associated with alterations in sleep continuity and sleep patterns.

Many of those who are routinely awakened by nearby industrial turbines would consider themselves lucky to get even four consecutive hours of uninterrupted sleep on a regular basis. This paper notes that

U.S. federal courts have found that sleep deprivation is also a violation of the Eight Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.

Perhaps it is time for groups like Physicians for Human Rights and Human Rights First and indeed the medical profession generally, to turn their intention toward the ongoing torture and cruelty perpetrated by the wind industry. Surely, such acts are criminal whether they are committed by governments or private industry.

Dr. William Hallstein, treating psychiatrist from Falmouth USA, made it abundantly clear that the impacts of the turbines are indeed tantamount to torture in his letter to the Falmouth Town Board of Health. It is telling that Justice Muse from the Falmouth Superior Court issued an injunction in December 2013 to prevent “irreparable harm to physical and psychological health” by turning the turbines off at night. The turbines at Falmouth (USA) remain turned off, over a year later.

Perhaps it’s time to face our own complicity and involvement in these fundamental violations of both civil and human rights, as well.

The wind industry cannot hide behind a claim of ignorance about the devastating impact of wind turbine noise on human health. N.D. Kelley and other NASA scientists from the Solar Energy Research Institute (SERI) have published papers that ascribe the direct causation of human disturbance to wind turbine noise. This group published numerous papers on this subject between 1982 and 1985 based on sound research and clear evidence. Then, in 1987, this research was presented directly to the wind industry at the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) Conference in San Francisco. In short, the wind industry has continued to site its industrial scale power and noise generators near residential neighborhoods for more than thirty years, knowing full well that it was inflicting cruelty and suffering on those living near them. The silence of public officials, the media, and the public indicates wind turbine torture may be allowed to continue for decades to come.

There can be no doubt that wind turbines cause chronic sleep deprivation, and no doubt that sleep deprivation is torture. The scientific evidence that turbines do cause sleeplessness is already prolific and continues to grow. Moreover, the most comprehensive literature reviews on this question reveal that there is virtually no independent evidence to controvert this conclusion. Perhaps the most damning evidence of all comes from the public record of health complaints from people around the world. According to the noted epidemiologist Carl V. Phillips, “There is overwhelming evidence that large electricity-generating wind turbines (hereafter: turbines) cause serious health problems in a nontrivial fraction of residents living near them.” Among these public health reports from turbine neighbors, sleep deprivation and disruption are by far the most common.

Taken together, the science and the public record of adverse health reports offer clear and compelling evidence that wind turbines are instruments of torture. Therefore, anyone who advocates for, or participates in, the siting of wind turbines near people is inflicting torture on them. Anyone who contributes to, or endorses, unsafe government noise pollution regulations, or who allows them to continue unabated when turbines are clearly causing sleep deprivation and other forms of human misery, or who ignores community complaints, or obstructs the accurate measurement of infrasound and low frequency noise inside homes is complicit with torture. And, anyone who knowingly conducts spurious turbine noise mitigations, or who permits or helps to perpetuate levels of infrasound and low frequency noise emissions above the thresholds established by Dr. Neil Kelley, and confirmed most

recently by Steven Cooper's research at Cape Bridgewater in Australia, must be held accountable for inflicting, or helping to perpetuate torture by prolonged sleep deprivation. Those who do so are guilty of criminal violation of both civil and human rights on an industrial scale.

This is why the global wind industry has strategically and systematically sought to silence wind turbine hosts and neighbors with property buy-outs and non-disclosure agreements. Undoubtedly, this is also why they and those who support them have publicly targeted acoustic engineers, health practitioners, and public health experts who have attempted to expose this truth in accordance with their canons of professional ethics. This industry subjects legitimate science to ridicule, its authors to character assassination, and its sleepless victims to blame and aspersions of mental defect. All of this is done to cloak conscious criminal cruelty in the name of unbridled greed.

In its determination to hide the ugly reality of industrial wind turbines, this industry uses money and the false promise of cheap energy to exert undue influence over public officials. It substitutes pseudo-science for legitimate science, spends untold millions on PR campaigns to drown out honest journalism, and sponsors fear-mongering in place of reasoned public discourse on renewable energy.

There may be no better evidence for this campaign of public deception than the so-called "Wind Turbine Health Impact Study: Report of Independent Expert Panel" produced in January, 2012 by an unholy alliance between the wind industry and Massachusetts governor's office. This document epitomizes the fraudulence, distortion, and misinformation that flourish when wind industry influence over government goes unchecked by public scrutiny and legal safeguards. The title notwithstanding, none of the authors of this so-called health study had any recognized expertise related to the health effects of wind turbines. None had ever given a physical examination to a turbine sufferer, and no turbine-related health complaints were investigated during the course of this study—despite the vocal and repeated pleas by effected residents to be examined as part of it. Although insufficient peer-review was one of the most salient criticism leveled against the legitimate studies reviewed; the Massachusetts study itself was not submitted to peer-review before its publication. For these and other reasons, it was [deemed junk science by Dr. Raymond Hartmann](#), who is widely recognized for his expertise in analyzing scientific evidence, and exposing the junk science used by the Tobacco industry to defend its products.

The "Expert Panel" study was published by the Massachusetts Departments of Environmental Protection and Public Health. When such junk science such as this is published by the very agencies responsible for protecting the environment and public health, it gives them the ring of authority. It is as though the state has mandated to an unsuspecting public that the torture must continue. In Milgram's experiment, when a subject refused to continue administering shocks, the authority figure would reassure them by saying something to the effect that no permanent tissue damage will be caused. In that context, the statement was quite true because no real shock was actually being given. But in the case of wind turbines, government sanctioned torture is very real and does real damage to health and safety—and that damage may indeed be permanent. As the epigraph from *Leave No Marks* reminds us, "The absence of physical evidence should not be construed to suggest that torture did not occur, since such acts of violence against persons frequently leave no marks or permanent scars."

For those who are willing to face their own conscience, there may be a glimmer of hope in Stanley Milgram's otherwise bleak findings. In some of his later experiments, Milgram tried to determine how conformity would affect the obedience of the experimental subjects. He found that when at least two others in the room refused to comply with authority, only about 10% of the experimental subjects were

willing to continue torturing. For those who have the courage to defy authority, it seems that disobedience can be contagious, and raising your voice loudly, publicly, and repeatedly against indiscriminant torture and injustice can truly make a difference.

About the author: Curt Devlin currently lives in Fairhaven, Massachusetts U.S.A. He was formerly a Teaching Fellow in the Philosophy Department at Tulane University. His opposition to the irresponsible use of wind energy began in 2007, when a wind project was proposed for the undisturbed and ecologically sensitive salt marshes surrounding a quiet estuary in the Little Bay area of Fairhaven—an area which is bordered by densely populated neighborhoods. Although this project was defeated, construction began clandestinely on Veteran’s Day in November of 2011. Since then, Devlin has been an outspoken critic of the wind industry and its proponents. He has written numerous articles and editorials on this and related topics. He has been a guest speaker at the Fairhaven Wind Forum in 2012, where he criticized the irresponsible siting of turbines in residential neighborhoods across Massachusetts and around the world. In 2013, he spoke on the fundamental human right to be free of unwarranted experimentation at the Falmouth Human Rights Conference in Falmouth, Massachusetts. Professionally, Devlin works as a software architect focused on the development of health science solutions for the detection and treatment of cancer and the improvement of human health.