

CHENEY LIES, OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE & TORTURE TAPE DESTRUCTION



graphic by PirateCat

Marcy earlier noted the article in today's Washington Post by Peter Finn and Joby Warrick detailing the story surrounding abu-Zubaydah's capture and torture. I want to pick up with Marcy's last line:

Yet more reason they destroyed the torture tapes showing Abu Zubaydah's interrogation.

Well, yes, because it was crystal clear at the outset the explanation initially given by the Bush/Cheney Administration – that they had researched the matter completely and the tapes had no evidentiary value in any possible proceeding whatsoever and they were concerned about privacy of hard working investigators – was totally bogus.

It has been my belief from the outset that the reason the "torture tapes" were destroyed was not simply because they depicted the brutal torture of detainee subjects but, just as importantly, if not more so, they demonstrated there was no credible/usable information produced as a result of that torture. Warrick and Finn confirm this. Even worse, they confirm what little good information the Bushies did extract from abu-Zubaydah was obtained through traditional interrogation prior to the onset of the torture program:

In the end, though, not a single significant plot was foiled as a result of Abu Zubaida's tortured confessions, according to former senior government

officials who closely followed the interrogations. Nearly all of the leads attained through the harsh measures quickly evaporated, while most of the useful information from Abu Zubaida – chiefly names of al-Qaeda members and associates – was obtained before waterboarding was introduced, they said.

Moreover, within weeks of his capture, U.S. officials had gained evidence that made clear they had misjudged Abu Zubaida. President George W. Bush had publicly described him as "al-Qaeda's chief of operations," and other top officials called him a "trusted associate" of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and a major figure in the planning of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. None of that was accurate, the new evidence showed.

Abu Zubaida was not even an official member of al-Qaeda, according to a portrait of the man that emerges from court documents and interviews with current and former intelligence, law enforcement and military sources.

And there you have it. The Bushies made the conscious and criminal decision to go full tilt torture having direct reason to know both that abu-Zubaydah was cooperating through traditional interrogation *and* he was of very marginal use as an information source to start with.

Frustrated, the Bush administration ratcheted up the pressure – for the first time approving the use of increasingly harsh interrogations, including waterboarding.

...

The application of techniques such as waterboarding – a form of simulated drowning that U.S. officials had previously deemed a crime – prompted a sudden torrent of names and facts. Abu

Zubaida began unspooling the details of various al-Qaeda plots, including plans to unleash weapons of mass destruction.

...

Abu Zubaida's revelations triggered a series of alerts and sent hundreds of CIA and FBI investigators scurrying in pursuit of phantoms...Every other lead ultimately dissolved into smoke and shadow, according to high-ranking former U.S. officials with access to classified reports.

"We spent millions of dollars chasing false alarms," one former intelligence official said.

Such is the clincher as to why the torture tapes *had* to be destroyed. It wasn't just that Bush/Cheney et. al wanted to keep evidence of their torture program secret, there was never any complete way to do that. But there was only one thing that could *prove* they tortured for nothing and got nothing – the tapes. Cheney and his coterie of fellow Torquemadas were fiends proud of their handiwork; if they had evidence that it worked, they would have kept it. They burn spies for fun, crow on television about their willingness to torture and what they have accomplished, do you really think for one second they wouldn't retain proof if they had it?

And let us not forget just who we are talking about here – it is the White House Principals group:

The so-called Principals who participated in the meetings also approved the use of "combined" interrogation techniques – using different techniques during interrogations, instead of using one method at a time – on terrorist suspects who proved difficult to break, sources said.

Highly placed sources said a handful of

top advisers signed off on how the CIA would interrogate top al Qaeda suspects – whether they would be slapped, pushed, deprived of sleep or subjected to simulated drowning, called waterboarding.

The high-level discussions about these "enhanced interrogation techniques" were so detailed, these sources said, some of the interrogation sessions were almost choreographed – down to the number of times CIA agents could use a specific tactic.

The advisers were members of the National Security Council's Principals Committee, a select group of senior officials who met frequently to advise President Bush on issues of national security policy.

At the time, the Principals Committee included Vice President Cheney, former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin Powell, as well as CIA Director George Tenet and Attorney General John Ashcroft.

As the national security adviser, Rice chaired the meetings, which took place in the White House Situation Room and were typically attended by most of the principals or their deputies.

Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld, Powell, Tenet and Ashcroft. Means, motive and opportunity. Who could have imagined?

This certainly explains why it was top White House lawyers including Gonzales, Addington, Bellinger and Miers, with "vigorous sentiment", assisted the CIA in the decision and process to destroy the torture tapes of abu-Zubaydah and others. There are definable offenses in their conduct: obstruction of justice, contempt of court, conspiracy, false statement/perjury,

mishandling of classified material, and willful destruction of material evidence in federal investigations.

There exist patently clear crimes; where is the criminal justice system? We should not have to be humiliated by having to rely on other first world countries such as Spain, or international committees such as the Red Cross, to show us functioning justice and the rule of law.

I don't want the Obama Administration to be partisan and spiteful, I want them to do their damn job. Is that too much to ask?