

DICK'S "PRESIDENTIAL-LEVEL" TORTURE DECISION

I'm just now catching up to Dick's appearance on CBS yesterday. And I gotta say, I'm not sure who comes off as more obtuse in this exchange, Cheney or Bob Schieffer. When Cheney talked about "the volume" of intelligence reports gotten through torture, Schieffer didn't ask the obvious follow-up about the quality of those huge numbers of reports. When PapaDick repeated the same claim his BabyDick made—that two out of three terrorists surveyed started talking after waterboarding—Schieffer doesn't ask what happened to Rahim al-Nashiri, and what it means that Dick doesn't assert waterboarding was effective with Nashiri. When Cheney trotted out the "we used these techniques on our own men and women," Schieffer mentioned neither the evidence that Bush Administration torture went far beyond what went on in SERE, nor the fact that SERE is premised on the fact that ~~these techniques produce false confessions, not real intelligence~~ torture produces unreliable intelligence [corrected per Jeff Kaye].

But Schieffer did, slightly, redeem himself by eliciting this weird response from Cheney on Bush's role in approving torture (at 5:00 in the YouTube above).

SCHIEFFER: How much did President Bush know specifically about the methods that were being used? We know that you— and you have said— that you approved this...

CHENEY: Right.

SCHIEFFER: ... somewhere down the line. Did President Bush know everything you knew?

CHENEY: I certainly, yes, have every reason to believe he knew — he knew a

great deal about the program. He basically authorized it. I mean, this was a presidential-level decision. And the decision went to the president. He signed off on it.

Pardon me, but what the fuck does it mean when a President "basically authorizes" torture?!?!? And what's the difference between a "presidential-level decision" and a "presidential decision," particularly when a number of key "presidential-level decisions" (such as the shoot down order on 9/11) during the Bush Administration got made by the Vice President?

I understand that some think this exchange constituted Cheney throwing Bush under the bus and it may be that.

But it reads to me instead like the groundwork for launching the same defense that Cheney was preparing in the Plame outing, that Bush "signed off on" the declassification of a bunch of things to rebut Joe Wilson, without necessarily signing off on the exposure of a CIA spy.

This is Cheney reveling in the gutting of our Constitution. And he's not even sure who gets credit for gutting it. And of course, Schieffer doesn't press him on the issue, either.