

WAS PORTER GOSS BRIEFED ON THINGS PELOSI AND HARMAN WEREN'T?

I decided recently that it was time to re-read George Tenet's book.

And given all the recent discussion about CIA briefings, I was a little surprised to see this paragraph pertaining to early discussions with the UK on the Iraq war.

In May of 2002, my counterpart in Great Britain, the head of MI-6, Sir Richard Dearlove, traveled to Washington along with Prime Minister Blair's then national security advisor, David Manning, to take Washington's temperature on Iraq. Sir Richard met with Rice, Hadley, Scooter Libby, **and Congressman Porter Goss, who was then chairman of the House Intelligence Committee.** (309) [my emphasis]

The paragraph almost appears to be a non-sequitur. The previous paragraphs discuss the series of meetings in 2002 that discussed the challenges of war in Iraq, without first addressing the question of "whether" war in Iraq was a good idea. Then the two paragraphs directly preceding this one pose the question, "When did you know for sure that we were going to war in Iraq"—but they focus on July 2002, not May. And the paragraphs following this one discuss the July 2002 Downing Street Memos and Dearlove's explanation to Tenet that he had concluded at the July 2002 meeting that war was "inevitable." (They also describe Dearlove disputing Libby's allegations of a tie between al Qaeda and Iraq.)

So ostensibly, at least, this paragraph about May 2002 might be there for contrast—the

previous meetings with which Dearlove was comparing the July 2002 meetings, after which he concluded there had been a "perceptible shift" and the war was definitely going to happen. Except that Tenet offers no details about what was said at that May 2002 meeting (note, Tenet did not apparently attend).

And regardless of the content of the meeting, what was Porter Goss doing at a meeting with the National Security Advisor, the Deputy National Security Advisor, Cheney's henchman, and the UK's chief spook? Was he representing "the temperature" of those in Congress on a potential Iraq war? Or was he participating in the Administration's early planning for that war?

I raise that question because of all the recent discussions about CIA briefings of Congress. This meeting occurred, of course, just as the Administration was implementing its torture program for Abu Zubaydah. CIA originally claimed that Bob Graham had been briefed on torture, twice, the previous month (April 2002). I have long suspected that Goss—the guy who would later have at least a tangential role in the destruction of the torture tapes that portrayed CIA torturing Abu Zubaydah before the Administration got formal approval from OLC—was "briefed" on torture in the April time frame, and that that was part of the Administration's CYA for torturing without Congressional approval.

And then there's the ongoing spat on the program that—Crazy Pete Hoekstra says—was "on-again, off-again" and as far as he knows never happened but which Congress was not informed of.

"If they'd done this thing and hadn't told us about it, I'd be screaming from the tallest building in Washington," Mr. Hoekstra said. "But it was on-again, off-again and never happened."

Yet it was Goss, not Hoekstra, who would have been the one informed in 2001 when the program

"on-again, off-again" started. And Goss, of course, is a candidate to be among the "certain officers" who "have not adhered to the high standards held, as a rule, by the CIA with respect to truthfulness in reporting."

Mind you, Tenet doesn't appear to be describing a briefing here. But the description of Goss' attendance at this meeting suggests it may not have been a matter of briefing with him so much as participation in the early planning.

For the Iraq War. And perhaps for other things.