

ABU ZUBAYDAH'S PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE

One of the things we got in yesterday's document dump is the psychological profile which John Yoo used to assert that Abu Zubaydah was fit to be tortured. There are four key details of it:

The Date

This document was faxed to John Yoo on July 25, 2002 at 5:04 PM (it was dated July 24), the day after OLC verbally authorized a number of the torture techniques used on Abu Zubaydah. But of course, they had already subjected him to two months of enhanced treatment—we know, for example, that they at least threatened to use the confinement box with him in May.

Which raises several questions. First, did they do any psychological profile before they first subjected him to sleep deprivation and isolation and confinement? Or did they just do one when OLC needed it to pretty up the OLC opinion authorizing torture?

Also, how much of what it records is itself a reflection of this earlier torture? For example, when they cite Zubaydah admitting he lies,

He said, "I lie, lie, lie, lie, lie, lie, and lie."

Was he referring to something he did before he was captured—or after? Were they taking his retraction of things he said under coercion as proof that he was more generally a liar? (The context suggests it was before, but I'm not sure I buy that.)

No Apparent Mention of Abu Zubaydah's Head Injury

There are two complete paragraphs redacted and significant other redactions here, so it may be

they've redacted all discussion of whether a prior, serious head injury ought to preclude someone from torture. But in what is unredacted, there is no mention of his head injury. So, for example, the section on "Emotional/Mental Status/Coping Skills" starts with this claim:

Overall, subject's background as revealed by self-report (including diaries and interview) does not indicate that he has a history of mood disturbance or other psychiatric pathology. Indeed, his reported and known history indicates that he is remarkably resilient and confident that he can overcome adversity. During the occasions that he experiences increased stress and/or low mood, he may become somewhat more withdrawn, melancholy, and reflective. However, the shift in mood will likely last a relatively short time. He denies and there is no evidence in his reported history of thought disorder or enduring mood or mental health problems.

Keep in mind, if this assessment was done in July, then the "somewhat more withdrawn" periods mentioned refer to his response to prior abuse!! We know that twice, after Mitchell took control of his interrogation and subjected him to abuse, he stopped talking. But this is how the failure of past abuse got translated into his profile for OLC.

The Claims that Abu Zubaydah Devised Al-Qaeda's Resistance Strategies

Given the centrality of the Al Qaeda resistance manual used as cover for Mitchell and Jessen's reverse engineering of SERE techniques, I find the mention of Abu Zubaydah's alleged role in writing the Al Qaeda manual telling.

Alleged to have written al-Qa'ida's manual on resistance techniques and lectured on the topic.

[snip]

He has talked with Ayman al-Zawahiri and it is likely that Zawahiri talked about his experience as a captive of the Egyptians and Russians. In addition, subject is familiar and probably well versed regarding al-Qa'ida's detentions and resistance training materials. Thus, one would expect that subject would draw upon this fund of knowledge as he attempts to cope with his own detention.

They had to include this bit, of course, because it's precisely the logic they used to rationalize torturing him. Pointing to his knowledge of Egyptian and, more importantly, Russian torture provides the perfect excuse to use reverse-engineered techniques based on Russian torture. Never mind that this information is all speculative.

And, incidentally, this appears to have gotten into the 9/11 Report.

Abu Zubaydah's Diaries

The profile also includes details that almost certainly come from a translation of Abu Zubaydah's diaries that his defense attorneys now challenge. Whereas Zubaydah claimed in his CSRT that he opposed attacks on civilians and 9/11.

I can't remember exactly what you talk about in my diary. I know exactly what I wrote. – writ wrote [asks for correction from Linguist] –One part I do remember, I write against eleven September.

[snip]

They killing of our child so we not care to killing their child; it's not allowed in Islam. I have it exactly, if you read my diary nice, you will understand my idea nice.

The profile states,

He conceded that he still wrestles with issues regarding the killing of civilians and how to determine who is "innocent." [redaction] He acknowledged that he celebrated the destruction of the World Trade Center.

Now, if the government would just give Abu Zubaydah this section of his diary—or at least have a neutral translator translate this section of it—we might be able to see whether these allegations, used in the profile to prove that Abu Zubaydah had directly supported 9/11, were completely fabricated. But the government refuses to give Abu Zubaydah his diaries.

Which might suggest how confident they are in this psychological profile.