

CHENEY'S HAGIOGRAPHER TAKES A MULLIGAN

Remember how, back in April, Cheney promised that two CIA documents he requested would prove torture worked? Remember how those documents proved no such thing?

Well now Cheney's hagiographer, Stephen Hayes, is taking a mulligan on the efficacy argument. (h/t Nan) Here, Hayes equates a few spooks' (and presumably, given the source, Dick's himself) attempt to cherry-pick some more documents with ACLU's support of total transparency.

But a growing number of CIA officials—both current and former—are in agreement right now with the ACLU about some of the most-sensitive information the U.S. government has obtained in the eight-year war on terror.

But of course, unlike the ACLU, these spooks just want some documents declassified—the documents they pick and choose, and not even most of the documents the ACLU is focusing on in the FOIA Hayes mentions at the end of the document.

But now there's a push from within the CIA to declassify and release even more information about the CIA's enhanced interrogation program. CIA officers believe that making public additional details will end the debate over the efficacy of the program, and so they are pushing to have hundreds of pages of highly classified documents declassified and released, including a detailed response to the IG report, two internal reviews of the interrogation program undertaken by respected national security experts, and perhaps even redacted versions of the raw

interrogation logs.

"Please! FOIA me!" The CIA is suddenly saying. "But don't FOIA the approval processes. Don't FOIA the early work involving John Yoo, John Rizzo, and David Addington. You don't want to see those documents!! No, check out these other documents."

These aren't the droids you're looking for.

Heck, Hayes even reveals one of John Helgerson's recommendations—which CIA had redacted in its entirety—to do an outside review.

In his 2004 report, Helgerson recommended bringing in an outside group to review the program. CIA director George Tenet delegated the task to the directorate of operations. Concerned about sharing details of the top secret program, officials "outside" of the interrogation program but still inside the CIA were selected to do the review. The team's findings are known inside the agency as the "rebuttal," and they argue that the program worked even more unambiguously than the IG report suggested.

Of course, Hayes doesn't tell you that the head of DO, Jim Pavitt, was part of the program itself (as the IG Report itself notes). I'm sure that didn't have any influence on the review.

Then Hayes invents reasons why no one wanted to be a part of a second follow-up report.

More than one person, including former Republican senator Warren Rudman, turned down the request to serve. (The reasons given most often were lack of time and subject-matter expertise, but several intelligence officials suspect the real reason for the reluctance was a fear of having to conclude, in writing, that the

controversial program was a success.)

But don't worry, Cheney and his spooks would like you to know, these are really credible reports, not like the report done by the quasi-independent IG, who (Hayes explains helpfully) "well known inside the CIA as a critic of the detention program."

Similarly, Hayes doesn't tell us why the two outside investigators—John Hamre and Gardner Peckham—wrote two separate reports even after conducting an investigation together. Perhaps because Hamre didn't agree with Peckham's conclusion that torture led directly to the collection of quality information?

In short, it's yet another attempt to make an argument that—even if it were sustainable, which it is transparently not—would not change the fact that torture has done far more harm than good.

Here's the part I love best, though:

Only the detainees themselves were off-limits to Hamre and Peckham.

We know that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has, himself, mocked our torture efforts. We know Rahim al-Nashiri and Abu Zubaydah recanted significant parts of their testimony. But I'm sure not letting these "independent" reviewers talk to detainees themselves was a mere oversight.

Instead of hearing from those who were tortured how much crap they gave in response, we get some cowboy former spook, assuring us that, "Almost all of the good information came from waterboarding and the other EITs," says a former senior U.S. intelligence official. "Once they broke, they broke for good. And then they talked forever."

Stephen Hayes, Cheney's hagiographer, took a mulligan. And he whiffed. Again.