

CIA STORES THEIR TORTURE TAPE THE SAME PLACE JUDY MILLER DOES!

Remember how Judy Miller stored the notes showing that the Vice President's lackey had leaked Valerie Plame's identity to her under her desk in a shopping bag? Remember how we mocked that kind of record keeping? Well, the AP reports that the CIA uses the same archival system as Judy:

The two videotapes and one audiotape are believed to be the only remaining recordings made within the clandestine prison system.

The tapes depict Binalshibh's interrogation sessions at a Moroccan-run facility the CIA used near Rabat in 2002, several current and former U.S. officials told The Associated Press. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because the recordings remain a closely guarded secret.

When the CIA destroyed its cache of 92 videos of two other al-Qaida operatives, Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Nashiri, being waterboarded in 2005, officials believed they had wiped away all of the agency's interrogation footage. But in 2007, a staffer discovered a box tucked under a desk in the CIA's Counterterrorism Center and pulled out the Binalshibh tapes.

I look forward to learning whether this particular box of torture tapes once belonged to Jose Rodriguez, who when the tapes were discovered had just retired as head of Clandestine Services but who was head of CTC when the tapes were made, or whether someone

else is a Judy Miller-style packrat.

Now, elsewhere in the AP story they make it clear that—as I have suspected—the tapes first revealed to Leonie Brinkema in 2007 were of Ramzi bin al-Shibh. That’s particularly significant because Brinkema had specifically given Zacarias Moussaoui permission to question al-Shibh in January 2003. So when the government told Brinkema they had no tapes (the AP says that since Morocco maintained control of the prison at which al-Shibh was held, CIA claimed it wasn’t “part” of the CIA program), they were denying evidence she had permitted to Moussaoui by name.

And this discovery has implications not just for Moussaoui, and for al-Shibh himself (the AP suggests the tapes may show that al-Shibh’s mental state declined very quickly after he was taken into custody; he had a pending competence assessment order in military commissions that—when al-Shibh was slotted for civilian trial—was thus negated), but also for Binyam Mohamed.

Mohamed, after all, has long claimed that the worst torture he suffered—the scalpels to his genitals—occurred while in that same Morocco prison in roughly the same time frame (though Mohamed was in Morocco longer). Mohamed made it clear the British were feeding questions to the US to ask while in Morocco (in interrogations, remember, they claim they weren’t running). Subsequently, documents showed that a member of MI5 visited Morocco while Mohamed was there. So Mohamed’s evidence refutes US claims that they—and their ally the UK—weren’t in charge of the interrogations. But at the same time, the videos may provide video evidence of the kind of treatment used in Morocco.

Now, the AP’s sources these tapes show “no harsh methods ... like waterboarding.”

But current and former U.S. officials say no harsh interrogation methods, like the simulated drowning tactic called

waterboarding, were used in Morocco. In the CIA's secret network of undisclosed "black prisons," Morocco was just way station of sorts, a place to hold detainees for a few months at a time.

"The tapes record a guy sitting in a room just answering questions," according to a U.S. official familiar with the program.

But as I noted, al-Shibh would have been in Morocco at the same time that Mohamed was, during which time he was cut and beaten. What are the chances that the Moroccans acting as our proxy treated al-Shibh much differently than they treated Mohamed?

These tapes may well undo at least three of the lies the government told to cover up its torture and its counterterrorism mistakes. If John Durham—who the AP notes has expanded his investigation to include possible obstruction tied to these tapes—does anything with the tapes.

Update: All you timeline aficionados should check out this cool timeline/map of where Ramzi bin al-Shibh was when.