9/11 COMMISSION REDUX

Spencer had a superb idea:

> I don't pretend that anything will
> produce an end to this new debate over
> torture. The fact that we're *debating*
> torture diminishes our standing as a
> civilization. But moving beyond it:
> perhaps, after the actionable
> intelligence is drained from the bin
> Laden documents, it would be useful to
> reconvene the 9/11 Commission and have
> them review the ten-year hunt for bin
> Laden. It's not helpful for something
> that looked like a failure on May 1 to
> be retconned into an inevitable,
> inexorable success. The tale of the bin
> Laden hunt — and the lessons to learn
> from it — is the logical final chapter
> of the 2004 report. And the gravitas of
> the 9/11 Commission, delivered through a
> public report, would create the closest
> thing possible to a narrative that can
> stand proudly before history.

And it would work not just for torture (though,
given that the 9/11 Commission had doubts about
the KSM interrogations they were reading in real
time in 2003, I suspect we know what they'd
conclude).

In addition to assessing whether torture,
skilled interrogation by al Qaeda experts, or
something else worked, the Commission could also
review whether dragnet illegal wiretapping or
targeted, legal wiretapping worked better;
whether human missions or drones did; whether
ground wars or smaller responses worked better
(particularly when the ground war had nothing to
do with terrorism). The Commission could develop
a sense of where our counterterrorist
investments paid off, and what served primarily
to enrich contractors. Whether it makes sense to

feel up cancer survivors at TSA gates, or whether the human screening already in place works better.

And, because we're about due, the Commission can repeat all the non-nonsense recommendations it made 7 years ago (like scans of shipping containers) that the government refuses to put in place.

I've said we need a pause to figure out what has worked and what hasn't. A 9/11 Commission 2.0 would work well for this.