

ZELIKOW, THE 9/11 COMMISSION, AND EFFECTIVENESS

If you've been paying attention, you know I've been poring through the 9/11 Report to figure out how useful the interrogation reports from the waterboarded detainees were, and when they made them.

That exercise shows that the 9/11 Report found just 10 pieces of intelligence from Abu Zubaydah's interrogation reports informative and credible; it found just 16 pieces of such intelligence in al-Nashiri's interrogation reports. And while the Commission did find KSM's interrogation reports to be incredibly useful, an incomplete index (I'm working on this, but it's on the back burner for the next week) of the references to KSM show that many of his most productive interrogation sessions came long after he was waterboarded. And, as Philip Zelikow made clear in a memo relating to the torture tape destruction, there were abundant other problems with the quality of the interrogation reports coming from CIA, too.

I emailed Zelikow yesterday to see if he would answer some more questions on this. He hasn't responded and I haven't had time to follow-up.

But it looks like I may not have to. Zelikow promises to address some of these issues shortly.

I will have more to say on the topic of effectiveness later.

Of particular interest, he makes this promise to address the effectiveness of torture in the context of the work the 9/11 Commission did with Ali Soufan, the FBI interrogator who called George Bush a liar yesterday.

I met and interviewed Soufan in the course of my work at the 9/11

Commission, while he was still doing important work at the FBI. From my commission work, my fellow staffers and I had direct knowledge about several of the specific assertions Soufan makes in this piece: about Abu Zubaydah, Ramzi Binalshibh, and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. My fellow staffers and I considered Soufan to be credible. Indeed, Soufan is fluent in Arabic, and he seemed to us to be one of the more impressive intelligence agents – from any agency – that we encountered in our work.

If the 9/11 Commission spoke with Soufan about AZ's treatment (Zelikow does not say they did, though he does say they asked why Soufan's KSM-expert colleague wasn't involved in those interrogations), it might explain why only 10 pieces of intelligence from AZ show up in the 9/11 Report.

In this post, Zelikow also confirms something I suggested this afternoon. Dick Cheney's up to his old ways, trying to selectively declassify manufactured information to prove his point.

Some of the very claims that Soufan describes were also used, while I was in government, in CIA memos defending the program that were submitted to the White House. Therefore, the declassification of those memos, as Vice President Cheney and others have called for, would only raise questions that would have to be answered with still more disclosures. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence appears to be trying to sort this out.

It took eight years. But I guess just about everybody is hip to—and sick of—Cheney's ways.