YOU CAN’T SPELL “WALTER PINCUS” WITHOUT C, I, AND A

Walter Pincus, in one of the rare moments when his lifetime relationship with the CIA supercedes his normally excellent reporting, claims that waterboarding was not used when Abu Zubaydah and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed were asked about Iraqi ties with Al Qaeda.

> Senior intelligence officials yesterday acknowledged that two al-Qaeda operatives, Abu Zubaida and Khalid Sheik Mohammed, had been questioned about alleged links between al-Qaeda and Iraq when the two men underwent CIA interrogation in 2002 and 2003. But the officials denied that the questioning on Iraq had included waterboarding.
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> "The two top priorities driving so-called enhanced interrogation techniques were information on the locations of al-Qaeda leadership and plots against the United States," one intelligence official said yesterday, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the subject publicly. "Questions were asked about Iraq, but the notion that waterboarding was used to extract from either an admission that Iraq and al-Qaeda had a relationship is false, period," he added.

Note, these two senior intelligence officials did not deny that Ibn Sheikh al-Libi was waterboarded to elicit a claim of an Iraqi-al Qaeda tie. They do not deny that Dick Cheney’s office pitched waterboarding an Iraqi to get such a claim. They do not deny that the non-briefing of Congress on torture was part of a plan to hide the torture which might undermine

the accuracy of Abu Zubaydah's claim of such a tie (note, KSM apparently never claimed there was a tie). And they do not deny that harsh methods were used by DOD to elicit such claims. In fact, they don't even deny that torture (but not waterboarding) was used in interrogations when KSM and AZ were asked about Al Qaeda ties with Iraq.

So the denial here falls short of even denying that the Administration used—and threatened to use—torture to trump up ties between al Qaeda and Iraq.

And besides, why should we believe this? Two senior officials, unwilling to go on the record to make this denial?

If someone wants to make this claim, let's see the records. Let's have your names (and the basis for your firsthand knowledge). Short of that—short of some evidence the CIA didn't just call Walter Pincus to issue a friendly denial—I really don't know why this would be considered credible.