

# NANCY PELOSI: CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS DO EXPECT THE SPANISH INQUISITION

**Ximinez:** NOBODY expects the Spanish Inquisition! Our chief weapon is surprise...surprise and fear...fear and surprise.... Our two weapons are fear and surprise...and ruthless efficiency.... Our \*three\* weapons are fear, surprise, and ruthless efficiency...and an almost fanatical devotion to the Pope.... Our \*four\*...no... \*Amongst\* our weapons.... Amongst our weaponry...are such elements as fear, surprise.... I'll come in again.

The WaPo is out today confirming something Mary suspected: Nancy Pelosi was briefed on—and raised no objection to—our methods of torture.

In September 2002, four members of Congress met in secret for a first look at a unique CIA program designed to wring vital information from reticent terrorism suspects in U.S. custody. For more than an hour, the bipartisan group, which included current House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), was given a virtual tour of the CIA's overseas detention sites and the harsh techniques interrogators had devised to try to make their prisoners talk.

[snip]

Pelosi declined to comment directly on her reaction to the classified briefings. But a congressional source familiar with Pelosi's position on the matter said the California lawmaker did recall discussions about enhanced

interrogation. The source said Pelosi recalls that techniques described by the CIA were still in the planning stage – they had been designed and cleared with agency lawyers but not yet put in practice – and acknowledged that Pelosi did not raise objections at the time.

Meanwhile, it's time for me to, once again, applaud Jane Harman for doing the right thing. She was apparently the only known Congressperson who raised a formal objection to the practices.

Harman, who replaced Pelosi as the committee's top Democrat in January 2003, disclosed Friday that she filed a classified letter to the CIA in February of that year as an official protest about the interrogation program. Harman said she had been prevented from publicly discussing the letter or the CIA's program because of strict rules of secrecy.

"When you serve on intelligence committee you sign a second oath – one of secrecy," she said. "I was briefed, but the information was closely held to just the Gang of Four. I was not free to disclose anything."

Go read the article. But for now, here are some thoughts on this:

- Frankly, I think our intelligence oversight has put the Administration in as difficult a position as John Yoo has. That is, by signing off on something (and, as the WaPo describes, in several cases encouraging it), our Congressional intell leaders gave the

Administration the legal sanction to torture. And now, after years of it, they're trying to shut it down. Shutting it down is far overdue—that has to happen. But we're now in the difficult place of condemning, as a society, practices that our society sanctioned as legal just a few years ago.

- We need to find a way to make intelligence oversight useful. On every major revelation like this, we have had at least one Democratic leader who objects to illegal practices. Yet that person is virtually helpless to respond.
- And for that matter, we need to get better intelligence leadership. As I showed yesterday, Jello Jay's first instinct when hit with one of these revelations is literally to parrot the script of the CIA. That's not oversight. If nothing else, this revelation needs to spark a call for real leaders in Intelligence, not the script-reader in the Senate and not someone whose brother is the CIA

torture master's buddy in  
the House. I nominate Russ  
Feingold and Rush Holt.

This nation has a lot to answer for before the  
rest of the world. Ugh.