

# BACK TO THE QUESTION OF ABC'S SOURCES

Remember that series of stories from ABC about Bush's top advisors choreographing torture techniques with Bush's explicit approval? I know it's hard to remember those stories what with your rabid obsession with flag pins and whatnot.

As a reminder, I had wondered who from the Principals Committee might have served as a source for ABC. Well, the Guardian just published this (h/t Ellie).

The US's most senior general was "hoodwinked" by top Bush administration officials determined to push through aggressive interrogation techniques for terror suspects held at Guantánamo Bay, the Guardian can reveal.

[snip]

- Myers believes he was a victim of "intrigue" by top lawyers at the department of justice, the office of the vice president, Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld's defence department.

- Myers wrongly believed interrogation techniques had been taken from the army's field manual.

The lawyers who pushed through the interrogation techniques – all of them political appointees – were Alberto Gonzales, David Addington and William Haynes.

Others involved were Doug Feith, Rumsfeld's undersecretary for policy, and Jay Bybee and John Yoo, two assistant attorney generals.

[snip]

The Bush administration has tried to explain away the ill-treatment of

detainees at Guantánamo and the Abu Ghraib prison, in Baghdad, by blaming junior officials.

Sands establishes that pressure for the aggressive and cruel treatment of detainees came from the very top and was sanctioned by the most senior lawyers.

Myers, the most senior military officer of the most powerful country in the world, was one top official who did not understand the implications of what was being done.

Sands, who spent three hours with the former general, describes him as being "confused" about the decisions that were taken.

[snip]

"As we worked through the list of techniques, Myers became increasingly hesitant and troubled," Sands writes. "Haynes and Rumsfeld had been able to run rings around him."

Myers and his closest advisers were cut out of the decision-making process, so he was not given sufficient opportunity to object to measures he now says he strongly disapproved of.

He did not know that Bush administration officials were changing the rules allowing interrogation techniques, including the use of dogs, amounting to torture.

"We never authorised torture, we just didn't, not what we would do," Myers said.

This piece certainly makes it clear that Myers would like to blame others for the torture regime in the US.

At the same time, the content of this article

suggests it is unlikely for the following lines in the ABC story:

“It kept coming up. CIA wanted us to sign off on each one every time,” said one high-ranking official who asked not to be identified. “They’d say, ‘We’ve got so and so. This is the plan.’”

[snip]

“These discussions weren’t adding value,” a source said. “Once you make a policy decision to go beyond what you used to do and conclude it’s legal, (you should) just tell them to implement it.”

This source seems to admit that the techniques rehearsed in the Principals Committee amounted to torture. And certainly, the techniques he seems to refer to must include some of the techniques that Sands reviewed with the General. So either Myers played dumb with Sands and not with ABC, or there’s another source from the Principals Committee.

Finally, Myers seems aware of the lawyers-level machinations around torture, but he does not admit to being aware of the Principals’ level machinations (except, perhaps, for that of Cheney and Rummy). That would make him a more likely source for the earlier WaPo story than for the ABC stories.

bmaz has shared his typically sardonic impression of Myers offline—I’ll let him repeat it in the comments. ~~But unfortunately, this portrayal of Myers getting “hoodwinked” doesn’t say much about the fact that Myers believes Dougie Feith is the fucking stupidest guy in the world.~~ A reader reminds me that Tommy Franks, not Myers, is the one who thinks Dougie Feith is the stupidest fucking guy in the world. Presumably, then, Franks thinks the hoodwinked Myers is not quite so bad.