

IT'S NOT THE WATER-BOARDING, IT'S THE BLOWS TO THE HEAD

Just to lay out a few details based on this article explaining that Obama continues to waver on what parts of the 2005 Bradbury torture memos to reveal. (h/t Steve)

1. According to the WSJ, it's not the description of water-boarding that the CIA wants to hide. It's the description of how the CIA threw people against the wall.

Among the details in the still-classified memos is approval for a technique in which a prisoner's head could be struck against a wall as long as the head was being held and the force of the blow was controlled by the interrogator, according to people familiar with the memos.

2. We know from the ICRC report this technique had been used, three years before Bradbury wrote his OLC memos, with Abu Zubaydah.

I was taken out of my cell and one of the interrogators wrapped a towel around my neck, they then used it to swing me around and smash me repeatedly against the hard walls of the room.

[snip]

When I was let out of the box I saw that one of the walls of the room had been covered with plywood sheeting. From now on it was against this wall that I was then smashed with the towel around my neck. I think that the plywood was put there to provide some absorption of the impact of my body. The interrogators realized that smashing me against the hard wall would probably quickly result in physical injury.

(According to the report, five more of the High Value Detainees described the same treatment.)

3. We know that Abu Zubaydah now has mental injuries and—apparently—cannot stand trial.

The WSJ quotes intelligence officials claiming that, if these details are made public, it'll be a propaganda tool for the terrorists.

Intelligence officials also believe that making the techniques public would give al Qaeda a propaganda tool just as the administration is stepping up its fight against the terrorist group in Afghanistan and Pakistan

But these details have already been made public, in the ICRC report and elsewhere. What the intelligence officials want to hide is that—even after they did this damage to Abu Zubaydah (though before the ICRC called it torture in 2007)—Steven Bradbury wrote an OLC memo declaring this treatment legal.