

WHY DID CIA HIDE DICK CHENEY'S ROLE IN BRIEFING?

Thanks to the WaPo for confirming something I guessed last month. Back then, I wrote,

I'm going to make a wild guess and suggest that when the CIA lists "not available" in a series of 2005 torture briefings to Republicans in Congress, they really mean "Dick Cheney attended, but we don't want to tell you that."

Today, the WaPo reports,

Former vice president Richard B. Cheney personally oversaw at least four briefings with senior members of Congress about the controversial interrogation program, part of a secretive and forceful defense he mounted throughout 2005 in an effort to maintain support for the harsh techniques used on detainees.

[snip]

The CIA made no mention of his role in documents delivered to Capitol Hill last month that listed every lawmaker who had been briefed on "enhanced interrogation techniques" since 2002. For meetings that were overseen by Cheney, the agency told the intelligence committees that information about who oversaw those briefings was "not available."

[snip]

The CIA declined to comment on why Cheney's presence in some meetings was left out of the records.

[snip]

Several members of Congress who took

part in the Cheney meetings declined to comment on them, citing secrecy concerns.

In one of my most unsurprisingly correct wildarsed guesses ever, Cheney was working with the CIA to keep his little torture program, and neither the CIA nor the Republicans he was arm-twisting want to talk about it.

But that ought to be worth some closer attention. WTF did the CIA hide Cheney's role in these briefings (not to mention the date of their briefing with McCain)? It reveals not only a desire to hide the degree to which these "briefings" under Porter Goss became active lobbying in support of torture, but also the degree to which the CIA is working actively, with a former Administration official (Cheney) to hide their collaboration.

The article does provide two more important details that add to the damning story.

Cheney's briefings on interrogations began in the winter of 2005 as the top Democrats on the Senate and House intelligence committees, Sen. John D. Rockefeller III (W.Va.) and Rep. Jane Harman (Calif.), publicly advocated a full-scale investigation of the tactics used against top al-Qaeda suspects.

On March 8, 2005 – two days after a detailed report in the New York Times about interrogations – Cheney gathered Rockefeller, Harman and the chairmen of the intelligence panels, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.), according to current and former intelligence officials. Weeks earlier, Roberts had given public statements suggesting possible support for the investigation sought by Rockefeller. But by early March 2005, Roberts announced that he opposed a separate probe, and the matter soon

died.

Cheney's efforts to sway Congress toward supporting waterboarding went beyond secret meetings in Washington. In July 2005, he sent David S. Addington, his chief counsel at the time, to travel with five senators – four of them opponents of the CIA interrogation methods – to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. On the trip, Sen. Graham urged Addington to put the interrogations at secret prisons and the use of military tribunals into a stronger constitutional position by pushing legislation through Congress, rather than relying on executive orders and secret rulings from Justice Department lawyers.

First, the WaPo reports that Jello Jay pushed for an investigation, but Pat Roberts quashed it. I guess that explains why Roberts is so quiet now. But in case anyone wanted any more affirmation that Democrats opposed torture and Republicans sustained it, there's yet one more data point.

And then yet another Gitmo trip for Addington, this time with some Senators in tow. Was this an all-Republican affair as well? The question is particularly relevant, since Lindsey Graham has helpfully reminded us that all these Republican-only briefings are proof of criminal intent. Or was it just Graham, McCain and the few other anti-torture Republicans, off on a field trip to be coerced by Cheney's right hand man?

If anyone needed yet more proof that torture was Cheney's baby, his active lobbying of Congress-hidden as "CIA briefings"-ought to do the trick.