

# FRED HIATT LOVES TORTURE

Well, I don't know that for a fact. But I do know that the publication of Marc Thiessen's propagandistic claims about Pelosi on the WaPo's editorial page says more about the WaPo's editorial page than it does about Pelosi. Let's start with Thiessen's primary claim.

According to this 2004 report, Pelosi objected to a CIA plan to provide money to moderate political parties in Iraq ahead of scheduled elections, in an effort to counter Iran, which was funneling millions to extremist elements. "House minority leader Nancy Pelosi 'came unglued' when she learned about what a source described as a plan for 'the CIA to put an operation in place to affect the outcome of the elections,' " Time reported. "Pelosi had strong words with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice in a phone call about the issue. . . . A senior U.S. official hinted that, under pressure from the Hill, the Administration scaled back its original plans."

Well, as Thiessen points out himself (and the WaPo even links), David Ignatius has already reported this ... in the WaPo! So why would Fred Hiatt feel the need to publish that news again, on his op-ed page?

But Thiessen—and presumably Hiatt—want to repeat this news so they can “prove” that Pelosi had the ability to alter intelligence programs that she didn't like.

Only there are several problems with Thiessen's claim. First, the briefings. As we've shown over and over and over and over, Pelosi was not briefed that the CIA had already waterboarded Abu Zubaydah during her only briefing on this issue before 2006. And she certainly wasn't

briefed that CIA was going into the torture business before they did so. So it would have been absolutely impossible for her to halt the waterboarding that had already happened, not to mention the planned ones she wasn't told about. Given the CIA's (probably deliberate) failure to brief Pelosi in timely fashion, they cannot now, no matter what Dick Cheney tells the former Bush speechwriter to write, claim that Pelosi could have prevented the waterboarding.

And the fact-impaired Thiessen also claims that this letter does not register a protest.

At the briefing you assured us that the [redacted] approved by the Attorney General have been subject to an extensive review by lawyers at the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Justice and the National Security Council and found to be within the law. It is also the case, however, that what was described raises profound policy questions and I am concerned about whether these have been as rigorously examined as the legal questions.

That "I am concerned" about the "profound policy questions," Thiessen? Those are protests. Protests, of course, that we know the CIA blew off.

So this is a transparently false argument, printed in Fred Hiatt's premier real estate.

I guess Dick Cheney must be getting worried again about his liability for torture.

Update: minor changes for accuracy.