

DICK AND THE NAKED SENATOR: WATERBOARDING BFFS

Breaking! (Not) Dick Cheney loves him some waterboarding.

KARL: If you have somebody in custody like Abdulmutallab, after just trying to blow up an airliner, and you think he has information on another attack, I mean, do you think that those enhanced interrogation techniques should have been – should have been used? I mean, would you – do you think that he should have been, for instance, subject to everything, including waterboarding?

CHENEY: Well, I think the – the professionals need to make that judgment. We've got people in – we had in our administration – I'm sure they're still there – many of them were career personnel – who are experts in this subject. And they are the ones that you ought to turn somebody like Abdulmutallab over to, let them be the judge of whether or not he's prepared to cooperate and how they can best achieve his cooperation.

KARL: But you believe they should have had the option of everything up to and including waterboarding?

CHENEY: I think you ought to have all of those capabilities on the table. Now, President Obama has taken them off the table. He announced when he came in last year that they would never use anything other than the U.S. Army manual, which doesn't include those techniques. I think that's a mistake.

Rather than focusing on Cheney's restatement of

his love for torture, I'd like to use the outrage about Cheney's calm embrace of waterboarding (again) to recall two other data points.

First, the guy Massachusetts just elected to replace Teddy Kennedy? He is just as big a fan of waterboarding as Dick Cheney.

State Senator Scott Brown, the Republican candidate for US Senate, endorsed yesterday the use of enhanced interrogation techniques – including the practice of simulated drowning known as waterboarding – in questioning terror suspects.

[snip]

Brown, in response to a question, told reporters that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, 23, the Nigerian accused of trying to blow up a passenger jet en route to Detroit on Christmas Day, should be treated as an enemy combatant, taken to the US detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, interrogated "pursuant to our rules of engagement and laws of war," and not be treated as a civilian criminal suspect. Brown asserted that waterboarding does not constitute torture, but he did not specifically say Abdulmutallab should be subjected to waterboarding.

"I don't support torture; the United States does not support torture," Brown, a military lawyer in the Massachusetts National Guard, told reporters.

Yes, it's bad that the war criminal who set up our torture system continues to push torture on the Sunday shows. But don't forget that Senator Scott Brown, a JAG in MA's National Guard with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, has several years of legislating ahead of him, and he supports torture just as proudly as Dick Cheney.

One more thing. See how Cheney claims that the “professionals” should make the decision about whether or not to waterboard someone? That may be true, in Cheney’s mind, for terrorist suspects. But don’t forget that Cheney’s office personally intervened to try to have an Iraqi whom they believed would tie Iraq to 9/11 waterboarded.

At the end of April 2003, not long after the fall of Baghdad, U.S. forces captured an Iraqi who Bush White House officials suspected might provide information of a relationship between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein’s regime. Muhammed Khudayr al-Dulaymi was the head of the M-14 section of Mukhabarat, one of Saddam’s secret police organizations. His responsibilities included chemical weapons and contacts with terrorist groups.

“To those who wanted or suspected a relationship, he would have been a guy who would know, so [White House officials] had particular interest,” Charles Duelfer, head of the Iraqi Survey Group and the man in charge of interrogations of Iraqi officials, told me. So much so that the officials, according to Duelfer, inquired how the interrogation was proceeding.

In his new book, *Hide and Seek: The Search for Truth in Iraq*, and in an interview with The Daily Beast, Duelfer says he heard from “some in Washington at very senior levels (not in the CIA),” who thought Khudayr’s interrogation had been “too gentle” and suggested another route, one that they believed has proven effective elsewhere. “They asked if enhanced measures, such as waterboarding, should be used,” Duelfer writes. “The executive authorities addressing those measures made clear that such techniques could legally be

applied only to terrorism cases, and our debriefings were not as yet terrorism-related. The debriefings were just debriefings, even for this creature.”

Duelfer will not disclose who in Washington had proposed the use of waterboarding, saying only: “The language I can use is what has been cleared.” In fact, two senior U.S. intelligence officials at the time tell The Daily Beast that **the suggestion to waterboard came from the Office of Vice President Cheney**. Cheney, of course, has vehemently defended waterboarding and other harsh techniques, insisting they elicited valuable intelligence and saved lives. He has also asked that several memoranda be declassified to prove his case. [my emphasis]

Cheney may now endorse, at least publicly, letting “the professionals” decide whether to torture someone or not. But back when he was trying to retroactively trump up some justification for the war in Iraq, the only thing that prevented us from using torture to produce propaganda for Cheney was the intervention of professionals.