

SENATOR BOB GRAHAM: MAJORITY ON SENATE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE SUPPORTED INTERROGATION OVERSIGHT IN 2002

A couple of weeks ago, I noted that the CIA Memorandum for the Record from their February 4, 2003 briefing of Pat Roberts revealed that Bob Graham, Roberts' predecessor as Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, had attempted to institute some oversight over the CIA's interrogation program in November 2002. After CIA discouraged the idea in the briefing, Roberts immediately backed off the idea of doing any oversight.

Roberts' [redacted; staffer?] asked me whether I had "taken up the line" the Committee's, actually Senator Graham's, late November request to undertake its own "assessment" of the enhanced interrogation. I [Stan Moskowitz, head of Congressional Affairs] explained to Senator Roberts the dialogue I had had with [redacted], and our response [sic] that we would not support reading another staffer into the program nor allow any staffer to review the interrogations in real time or visit the clandestine site where the interrogations were taking place. Quickly, the Senator interjected that he saw no reason for the Committee to pursue such a request and could think of "ten reasons right off why it is a terrible idea" for the Committee to do any such thing as had been proposed. Turning to [redacted], he asked whether they thought otherwise and they indicated that they agreed with the

Senator.

I wanted to know what kind of oversight Graham had had in mind, so I asked Senator Graham for an explanation of the reference. According to Graham, a majority of Committee members in November 2002—including a few Republicans—supported conducting oversight of the program. And it seems that CIA mischaracterized to Roberts what Graham had planned, perhaps in an effort to dissuade Roberts from conducting that oversight.

Graham reminded me (as I reported last May) that he was never briefed on the abusive techniques the CIA was using. So he didn't decide to do more oversight of the program because of concerns about the techniques.

Rather, there was “a lot of smoke” that made it clear “something out of the norm was occurring.” There were “rumors that something was occurring out of the ordinary.” (I asked specifically whether he had heard any rumors about the November 2002 Salt Pit death, but he said he had not.)

But contrary to what the CIA represented to Roberts, Graham wasn't asking to “review the interrogations in real time.” He was planning initial oversight of the interrogation program. He wanted to ask basic questions about what was going on:

- What's going on?
- Who authorized the program?
- What [intelligence] are we getting out of it?

Graham told me that “well over a majority” of the committee supported doing such oversight. When I asked, he said Jay Rockefeller, who replaced him as the Ranking Democrat on the Committee, supported the effort. Though Graham didn't remember precisely who was on the Committee at the time (here's the list), he named Richard Lugar and Mike DeWine as two of

the Republicans who were probably in the majority supporting this kind of oversight over the program.

But between CIA's apparent misrepresentations to Roberts and Roberts' own disinterest in asking even the most basic questions about the CIA's interrogation programs, those efforts ended when Graham left the committee and Roberts took over as Chair.

And that's how Pat Roberts and CIA agreed to avoid asking or answering even the most basic questions about the Bush Administration's torture program.