

THE TORTURE APOLOGISTS RATCHET UP THE ATTACK

You know how the Moonie Times let go almost all of its “journalists” last year? Well, apparently they haven’t let go of their CIA mouthpiece (not a surprise, I guess, since MT has always been one big disinfo campaign), Bill Gertz. And he’s out this morning suggesting (though not saying explicitly) that the CIA wants human rights lawyers trying to identify the people who interrogated their clients investigated for Intelligence Identity Protection Act violations—the crime Dick Cheney got away with when he outed Valerie Plame. (h/t MadDog)

As a reminder, detainee defense lawyers have undertaken what they call the John Adams Project—an effort to take pictures of suspected interrogators that they can show to their clients to positively ID. The hope is to call detainees’ interrogators to testify at their habeas proceedings and/or criminal trials. Of course, this information **should** be available to detainees in any case, but the government routinely protects it under national security classification rules.

The CIA, of course, is apoplectic that its interrogators might be tied to what they did to these detainees. So, in a brief to longtime CIA guy and now top Homeland Security advisor to Obama, John Brennan, they appear to be trying to suggest the John Adams project be investigated for IIPA violations. And because one of the DOJ staffers is a former House Intelligence Committee staffer (but not, according to the CIA, one of the guys briefed during the most secretive torture briefings), and because the torture apologists are already conducting a witch hunt of those at DOJ they say are al Qaeda sympathizers, Vieira has recused himself and DOJ has apparently brought in Patrick Fitzgerald (who knows a thing or two about IIPA violations)

to try to resolve the dispute.

According to U.S. officials familiar with the issue, the current dispute involves Justice Department officials who support an effort led by the American Civil Liberties Union to provide legal aid to military lawyers for the Guantanamo inmates. CIA counterintelligence officials oppose the effort and say giving terrorists photographs of interrogators has exposed CIA personnel and their families to possible terrorist attacks.

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Donald Vieira, a former Democratic counsel on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence who in September became chief of staff at the Justice Department's National Security Division, recused himself from the counterintelligence investigation into the recent discovery of photographs of CIA interrogators in the possession of defense lawyers at the prison in Cuba.

The investigation has been under way for many months, but was given new urgency after the discovery last month of additional photographs of interrogators at Guantanamo showing CIA officers and contractors who have carried out interrogations of detainees, according to three officials familiar with the investigation. They spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Findings of the investigation to date produced some signs that the senior al Qaeda detainees at Guantanamo gained intelligence on CIA interrogators through their lawyers that could be used in future legal proceedings.

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Details on Mr. Vieira's recusal could

not be learned, but the Justice Department team recently added Mr. Fitzgerald, the U.S. attorney in Chicago who led the controversial 2005 investigation into the public disclosure of the identity of CIA undercover officer Valerie Plame.

But PatFitz appears to have been unable to convince CIA not to use whatever inflammatory language they want to use (again, given the players, I'm suspecting it's a claim that IIPA was violated) in a brief for John Brennan on the subject.

According to the officials, the dispute centered on discussions for a interagency memorandum that was to be used in briefing President Obama and senior administration officials on the photographs found in Cuba.

Justice officials did not share the CIA's security concerns about the risks posed to CIA interrogators and opposed language on the matter that was contained in the draft memorandum. The memo was being prepared for White House National Security Council aide John Brennan, who was to use it to brief the president.

The CIA insisted on keeping its language describing the case and wanted the memorandum sent forward in that form.

That resulted in the meeting and ultimately to Mr. Vieira withdrawing from the probe.

Aside from the underlying issues—such as that some if not most of the interrogators in question are contractors who were working for Mitchell and Jessen, the fact that their identities are obvious enough for hippie human rights lawyers to discover them, and the fact that (contrary to Gertz' use of the word

"terrorist" throughout) some of the detainees in question are not terrorists at all--this seems to be the next step in the witch hunt, in the effort to make defending alleged but not proved terrorists itself a crime.

The other irony, of course, is that the torture apologists are spending so much effort attacking DOJ when, at the same time, DOJ appears to be working overtime to prevent anyone at CIA or in the Bush Administration from being held accountable for the torture they committed. CIA ought to be thanking DOJ and instead they continue the witch hunt.