

ABU ZUBAYDAH EXPERIENCED “HARD” DISLOCATION AFTER SESSION 63

Whoever wrote Abu Zubaydah’s psychological evaluation claimed to have succeeded in subjecting Abu Zubaydah to “hard” dislocation after his 63rd session of torture. And that claim was made before OLC approved the use of torture with him.

I’ve long been aware that we got two versions of Abu Zubaydah’s psychological evaluation last August: the copy purportedly faxed to John Yoo on July 24, 2002. And the copy faxed to the Inspector General on January 31, 2003 as it began its investigation. I had reviewed them last August and—while I found some weird details I’ll get to in a second—had concluded that they were effectively the same content.

They’re not.

The key difference appears in the top paragraph on the fourth page of the evaluation. The copy purportedly sent to Yoo includes these sentences:

In addition, he showed strong signs of sympathetic nervous system arousal (possibly fear) when he experienced the initial “confrontational” dislocation of expectation [] during an interrogation session. Due to his incredibly strong resolve, expertise in civilian warfare, resistance to interrogation techniques (the latter two which he trained hundreds of others on) this experience was one of the few that led to him providing significant actionable intelligence. [my emphasis]

In the copy sent to the IG the following year,

that passage reads this way.

In addition, he showed strong signs of sympathetic nervous system arousal (possibly fear) when he experienced the initial “hard” dislocation of expectation intervention following session 63. Due to his incredibly strong resolve, expertise in civilian warfare, resistance to interrogation techniques (the latter two which he trained hundreds of others on) this experience was one of the few that led to him providing significant actionable intelligence. [my emphasis]

The copy sent to the IG identifies precisely when this dislocation happened—after session 63—and calls it “hard” dislocation rather than “confrontational.”

I’ll leave it to the psychologists in the crowd to explain precisely what they mean by the phrase “dislocation of expectation.” And while we don’t know what numbering system the torturers were using for their torture sessions, if they had daily sessions the 63rd would have come some time in mid-June. Long before this memo was written. Whatever else this detail shows, it shows that the torturers were far down the path of torture before they wrote this assessment and they had already broken Abu Zubaydah.

Now, I said above that the first assessment linked here was “purportedly” sent to John Yoo on July 24. That’s because (as I and I think others have pointed out before) the document provides conflicting dates. The cover sheet is dated July 24. The instruction for Yoo to “call me at work or at home, whenever” reflects some degree of urgency. But the following pages clearly show a fax timestamp from July 25 at 5:02 PM. Unless this was a dateline issue (that is, unless it was sent from Thailand or something), then the copy we’ve got—the one with the session number removed—is a later iteration

of the assessment.

Also note that the fax cover sheet of the July 24/25 version says the document includes 7 pages. And indeed, we do get seven pages. But the Bates stamp in the bottom right hand corner are missing a page from the series, 0000001 (in fact, the series seems to be different, given the "T" that appears on the cover sheet). Note, too, the Bates numbers from the top right hand corner, which show someone couldn't decide whether this was document 71 or document 79 (the number 71 is the number from IG's FOIA response).

One more interesting detail. Both of these assessments came from CIA's IG. (Though the second number on the front page of the July 24/25 document bears a number showing it was once in Counterterrorism Center's legal department.) Thus, even though we know OLC probably got at least two drafts of the assessment (one on July 24 and one on July 25), we haven't seen the copy they should have in their SCIF.

Oh wait. OLC's SCIF.

That would be OLC's leaky SCIF, from which documents have a way of disappearing. In fact, one of the documents we know to have disappeared from OLC's SCIF bears the date July 25, 2002. The missing document is probably not the same document (the missing document is much longer). But as I've said, it's an awfully suspicious day to be losing documents.