

WHY IS MICHAEL HAYDEN'S DESPERATION ON ILLEGAL INTERROGATION MORE URGENT THAN ON ILLEGAL WIRETAPPING?

Even though he admits yet again that torture didn't get Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Abu Furaj al-Libi to reveal the name of Osama bin Laden's courier, Michael Hayden has launched yet another round of sophism to defend the case that torture led to Osama bin Laden—and if it didn't it produced a whole lot of information. The only thing that's novel about this latest effort is the new contortions he goes through to try to avoid admitting that torture didn't do what it was promised it would do: provide the most critical information quickly.

But it got me thinking.

Michael Hayden was a not-bad CIA Director. Particularly compared to his predecessors George "Slam Dunk" Tenet and Porter Goss and his Gosslings he was reasonably successful.

But he was a pretty big failure as head of the NSA.

There's all the revelations the government wants to send Thomas Drake to jail for revealing: that Hayden chose to enrich SAIC with \$1 billion of pork rather than invest \$3 million in house for something that worked far better. That management failures prevented NSA from implementing the security improvements that might have prevented WikiLeaks, not to mention so much of the hacking done by our enemies.

And while I don't hold it against him, under Hayden's command, NSA did fail to find the 9/11 terrorists whose calls in the US had been picked

up on wiretaps to an al Qaeda safe house. Nor did NSA pick the hijackers up as they were wiring their excess funds back to Dubai from a Giant store close to Ft. Mead.

But Hayden's real failure, of course—and a near parallel to the torture decision that he says “I thank God that I did not have to make”—was in bowing to Bush and Cheney's claim to inherent power to set up an illegal wiretap program that not only compromised Americans' privacy, but didn't work.

Indeed, the Inspectors General who reviewed Hayden's illegal wiretap program found it to be about as ineffective as the CIA Inspector General found torture to be.

So why is Hayden wasting his breath boasting about how effective torture was rather than making specious claims that the illegal program implemented under his command nailed OBL?

Mind you, the NSA (or perhaps Pakistani SIGINT) played an absolutely critical role in tracking down the courier that led us to OBL. But no one claims the illegal program provided even a shred of intelligence that helped us find OBL. If anything, our belief in the magic of the illegal program—and SIGINT in general—apparently led counterterrorism types to dismiss the importance of couriers for some years after it should have become clear al Qaeda had taken measures to avoid using the telecom they knew Americans were tracking.

So why is Hayden blowing so much hot air about the value of torture? Would claims that the illegal wiretap program Hayden implemented played a role be even more ridiculous?