

BIN LADEN FOUND BY TROLLING THE WEEDS, NOT BY TORTURE

Adam Goldman and Matt Apuzzo have a nice and fascinating article out today telling the story of a single CIA career analyst who was the critical cog in collating the information that led to Osama bin Laden's capture and death:

He examined and re-examined every aspect of bin Laden's life. How did he live while hiding in Sudan? With whom did he surround himself while living in Kandahar, Afghanistan? What would a bin Laden hideout look like today?

The CIA had a list of potential leads, associates and family members who might have access to bin Laden.

"Just keep working that list bit by bit," one senior intelligence official recalls John telling his team. "He's there somewhere. We'll get there."

Goldman and Apuzzo have done good work here; it is a great story, please read it in its entirety. But I want to play off their work to take it the step further that they did not. This is not just a feel good story about what worked and went right to capture bin Laden, it is an instructive primer on what didn't work, to wit: torture.

So, while we congratulate CIA analyst "John", let us also remember that years of effort, centuries of founding principles and an eternity of American morality was lost to the Bush/Cheney torture brigade. Ever since Osama bin Laden's take down, the torture apologists have come out of their caves bleating at full voice in a vain attempt to justify their war crimes and save their face. Even yesterday, as the nation celebrated its founding, one of the most craven

torture toadies of all, Marc Theissen, was back at it, saying the country owed the torture freaks an apology.

But torture is not what caught Osama bin Laden, good solid human intelligence and analysis were what did the trick.

That ability to spot the importance of seemingly insignificant details, to weave disparate strands of information into a meaningful story, gave him a particular knack for hunting terrorists.

Yes. Around here, we call that digging and trolling in the weeds. It is what works; not torture.