

JOSE RODRIGUEZ' IDEA OF "UGLY VISUALS": BLANK AND ALTERED TAPES

Jose Rodriguez, not exactly a squeamish guy, is spreading a myth that the reason he destroyed the torture tapes was because the torture depicted on them was so bad that people would kill CIA officers in response to the violence

Especially after the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal, Rodriguez writes, if the CIA's videos were to leak out, officers worldwide would be in danger.

"I wasn't going to sit around another three years waiting for people to get up the courage," to do what CIA lawyers said he had the authority to do himself, Rodriguez writes. He describes sending the order in November 2005 as "just getting rid of some ugly visuals."

Except there's a problem with that claim.

The problem with the torture tapes is not what they showed, but what they didn't show. Such as the two separate waterboarding sessions that were, for some reason, not captured on tape at all.

OIG found 11 interrogation tapes to be blank. Two others were blank except for one or two minutes of recording. Two others were broken and could not be reviewed. OIG compared the videotapes to logs and cables and identified a 21-hour period of time" which included two waterboard sessions" that was not captured on the videotapes.

Or the way many of the tapes showed some sign of tampering that hid their content.

[Redacted] for many of the tapes one 1/2 or 3/4 of the tape "there was nothing." [Redacted] on some tapes it was apparent that the VCR had been turned off and then turned back on right away. [Redacted] on other tapes the video quality was poor and on others the tape had been reused (taped over) or not recorded at all. [Redacted] The label on some tapes read "interrogation session," but when viewed there was just snow. [Redaction] did not make note of this in [redaction] report. [Redaction] estimated that "half a dozen" videotapes had been taped over or were "snowy."

In other words, the tapes probably didn't show the worst torture sessions. On the contrary, the tapes were enduring proof that the torturers tampered with the tapes to make sure they didn't show the torture sessions.

Apparently, Jose Rodriguez thinks a bunch of snowy taped over tapes—proof that the torturers covered up evidence of what they did—constitutes "ugly visuals." And I guess it does, but not in the way he's claiming in his book.