

STATE'S FUNNY VIEW OF OUR DEMOCRACY

In addition to its story about the State Department talking points it “accidentally” got (see my post on that), the AP included the talking points themselves.

The talking points are particularly pathetic for the way they try to turn the torture report – and our treatment of torture more generally – as proof of functional democracy.

The TPs claim the report is evidence of the government’s transparency...

The fundamental facts about this program have been known for some time. The U.S. government is committed to transparency and has released much of this information to the public before. This report adds additional details which confirm the wisdom of our national decision not to use such interrogation methods again.

... of our vibrant democracy...

America’s democratic system worked just as it was designed to work in bringing an end to actions inconsistent with our democratic values.

[snip]

America can champion democracy and human rights around the world not because we are perfect, but because we can say that our democratic system enables us to confront and resolve our problems through open and honest debate. Our Congress issued this report, and the Obama administration strongly supported its declassification, in that spirit.

... and the separation of powers ...

These interrogation methods were debated in our free media, challenged in our independent courts, and, just two years after their introduction, restricted by an act of our Congress sponsored by Senator John McCain and overwhelmingly backed by members of both of our political parties.

The last talking point is particularly neat given that 1) it gets the timing of the Detainee Treatment Act (passed in late 2005, and therefore over 3.5 years after torture started, not 2) wrong – not to mention its efficacy at ending torture, and 2) the Executive, including this President, has prevented any court challenge to torture by claiming state secrets and immunity, and as recently as this month claimed the victims of our torture cannot describe their own torture before the Gitmo Kangaroo Court. John Kiriakou, in particular, will likely find this talking point curious.

I'm just as interested in how aggressively State prepares to answer questions posed on CIA's behalf in these questions:

4. Is the White House in a position to say that no useful information was obtained?
5. Isn't the CIA in a better position to assess this?
6. Does the CIA believe useful information was obtained?
- [snip]
13. Does the CIA still stand by its response to the SSCI, or did the SSCI address the CIA's concerns when it revised its report?

Perhaps that's just State doing its best to prep the questions that CIA will cue compliant journalists to ask. And admittedly, State is going to have to do some of the damage control with countries like UK and Poland, which will be

embarrassed by the report.

Still, I can't help but remember that Maria Harf was CIA spokesperson before she moved over to State – indeed, actually started on the analytical side of the house.

In any case, it's nice to know that State thinks impunity for torture is a sign of a vibrant democracy.