

REMEMBER THAT NASHIRI'S TORTURE — “REAL TORTURE” — DIDN'T WORK

Yesterday, the Telegraph reported that the “waterboarding” used with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri was far worse than described before – more actual drowning to the point of death than “pours.”

The description of the torture meted out to at least two leading al-Qaeda suspects, including the alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, far exceeds the conventional understanding of waterboarding, or “simulated drowning” so far admitted by the CIA.

“They weren’t just pouring water over their heads or over a cloth,” said the source who has first-hand knowledge of the period. “They were holding them under water until the point of death, with a doctor present to make sure they did not go too far. This was real torture.”

That CIA was drowning people rather than “pouring” water over them is not news. Details described by the Telegraph exactly match the WaPo’s description of CIA’s drowning of Ammar al-Baluchi just months after KSM’s worst torture.

If declassified, the report could reveal new information on the treatment of a high-value detainee named Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, the nephew of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the self-proclaimed mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks. The Pakistanis captured Ali, known more commonly as Ammar al-Baluchi, on April, 30, 2003, in Karachi and turned him over to the CIA

about a week later. He was taken to a CIA black site called "Salt Pit" near Kabul.

At the secret prison, Baluchi endured a regime that included being dunked in a tub filled with ice water. CIA interrogators forcibly kept his head under the water while he struggled to breathe and beat him repeatedly, hitting him with a truncheon-like object and smashing his head against a wall, officials said.

As with Zubaida and even Nashiri, officials said, CIA interrogators continued the harsh treatment even after it appeared that Baluchi was cooperating.

But I'm a little curious about this story.

It comes from a "security source" (which sounds like a contractor), single sourced. And it describes the treatment of two detainees whose torture has been most closely scrutinized, which makes it interesting this is only coming out now.

All that said, one question I hope we'll answer once the summary of the SSCI torture report gets released later this year is what happened with Nashiri's waterboarding.

Two things distinguish his treatment from Abu Zubaydah and KSM's, after all: at least according to public reports, he was only waterboarded twice (by whatever twisted means you want to quantify torture). More interestingly, even Liz BabyDick Cheney doesn't claim Nashiri gave up useful information after being waterboarded.

There's a story about Nashiri's "waterboarding" that's overdue to be told. I wonder how close to death CIA brought him?