

 **TORTURE IS ONLY VAGUELY DEFINED: Memories fade, imaginations sharpen, and politicians cover their BUTTS!**  **SO LET'S FIND A DEFINITION!**

By Stephen L. Bakke  December 20, 2014



Hey SB! In order to celebrate your birthday a few days ago, I was spending a little extra time with the Wall Street Journal editorial section and found this excellent description of the Senate's Majority (Democrat) Report on Torture: "The report on CIA interrogations is a collection of partisan second-guessing ... The report is more important for illustrating how fickle Americans are about their security, and so unfair to those who provide it." Do you know why this is, SB? Because interrogation techniques and torture have never been classified or defined, politicians can interpret it in whatever way they desire, if it serves their purpose. And without any clear definition, interpretations "drift" over time. Let's put our heads together and be part of coming up with a definition. – Stefano Bachovich – obscure curmudgeon and wise political pundit – a prolific purveyor of opinions on just about everything – SB's primary "go to guy."

I guess I agree with old Stefano. I once wrote "I don't know what torture is, but I'll know it when I see it!" That's just an embarrassing "cop out"! So I'm going to take a "stab" at it. (Whoops! There I go, using harsh and violent language! SORRY!) But first let's get an idea of what Stefano means by "interpretation drift" – I sometimes call it "WIPLASH!"

WIPLASH (One of the things that's not covered by ObamaCare?)

Democrats, mostly, are now using the following phrases when discussing "enhanced interrogation techniques": *vengeance, not what we are, moral stain, valueless, mere expedience, undermining U.S. values, unrepentant perpetrators, debased policy*, and so on. Keeping the Democrat's Torture Report in mind, let's take a look at just a few examples of what some of these same people were saying "back in the day," about the enhanced interrogation measures most of them now oppose, acting as if "it's new to me":

- *Every one of us can imagine the following scenario: We get lucky and we get a number three guy in al-Qaida and we know there's a big bomb going off in America in three days and we know this guy knows where it is – know (sic) we have the right and responsibility to beat it out of him.* – Bill Clinton in 2006
- *We have to do some things that historically we have not wanted to do to protect ourselves.* – Senator Diane Feinstein, shortly after 9/11
- *We understood what the CIA was doing We gave the CIA our bipartisan support; we gave the CIA funding to carry out its activities.* – Porter Goss, Nancy Pelosi's

chairman on the House Intelligence Committee. Pelosi was then the ranking member of the committee – this was shortly after 9/11.

- *I wouldn't take anything off the table where he is concerned.* – Democrat Senator Jay Rockefeller, while vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee in 2003, when asked about turning over Khalid Sheik Mohammed to countries known to torture.
- *I'd like to interject a note of balance here I think there are probably very few people in this room or in America who would say that torture would never be used, particularly if thousands of lives are at stake. Take the hypothetical: If we knew there was a nuclear bomb hidden in an American city and we believed that some kind of torture, fairly severe maybe, would give us a chance of finding that bomb before it went off, my guess is that most Americans and most senators, maybe all, would say, "Do what you have to do."* – Senator Chuck Schumer, during a Senate hearing in 2004 – quite different from his current position!



Does it Hurt? Or Are You Scared?

Defining torture is very difficult, and many who make it sound simple are “spinning” and “grandstanding”. There are charges of illegal torturing involving the waterboarding technique. I have read the words used in our laws governing torture and commentary about it, and it is by no means clear as to what was intended. It’s easy to get tangled in words such as “severe” and “suffering”, and concepts such as “intent”, “circumstances”, and “timing”. I believe the language comfortably points to an interpretation that would allow waterboarding, and similar techniques, in situations of extreme importance to national security or lives of Americans.

My layman’s working definition is, I believe, logical and reasonable. Here it is:

An interrogation technique becomes torture when it crosses the line from causing extreme discomfort or fear, to causing permanent physical harm to the person being interrogated. A technique that is done to punish, or out of sadistic cruelty, is terribly wrong even if that line is not crossed – and should be prohibited. There must be a compelling national security or life threatening situation to justify using a technique such as waterboarding. Under my definition of what may be acceptable under extreme circumstances, there are no fingernails pulled out, eyes damaged, electric wires attached to body parts, broken bones, or punctures. But I do, sadly, recognize the need to be really tough in a really tough situation.

Do you think that will satisfy old Stefano?

Democrats who approved of enhanced interrogation at the time (such as Feinstein) must now construct an elaborate fantasy world in which they were not knowledgeable and supportive. They postulate a new reality in which they were innocent and deceived – requiring a conspiracy from three former CIA directors, three former deputy directors and hundreds of others. – Michael Gerson, Washington Post