

## WHY IS OUR PRESIDENT TORTURING US?

Stephen L. Bakke – June 15, 2009

*(Take a peek at the GLOSSARY of GOVSPEAK near the end of this report – it'll help.)*

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### **P-BOB's Secret**

#### ***News Item: President Rejects Waterboarding as Most Effective Method of Interrogation***

P-BOB had this to say during an address in May while HE-SINGN from one TOTUS to the other: "I know some have argued that brutal methods like waterboarding were necessary to keep us safe. I couldn't disagree more ..... I reject the assertion that these are the most effective means of interrogation".

Notice that he did not deny that waterboarding (WB) had been effective and accomplished its objectives. If there is something more effective, what is it? He knows, and we should know, that was purely a "campaign statement", and contained no substance. He doesn't have a method in mind. At best it was wishful thinking, and at worst blatantly untrue.

### **Question the Questioner**

Several questions were advanced by Dennis Prager for questioning WB opponents about their objections. These are intended to clarify where sincerity ends and politics begins. These also can help someone clarify their own position. Here are brief versions of several questions: Are all forms of painful pressure equally morally objectionable? Is any maltreatment of anyone at any time – even a high-level terrorist with knowledge that would likely save innocents' lives – wrong? If you are of the opinion that the use of WB encourages terrorist recruitment and makes their treatment of U.S. captives more brutal, will you acknowledge that the President's release of classified interrogation memos could inflame these reactions even more – and will you accept any moral responsibility for those suffering as a result?

Politics has way too much influence on what we hear reported. The recent attempts to embarrass Republicans and W's administration are examples. There has been significant Democratic pressure to prosecute those in the prior administration, and their legal advisors, for criminal activities regarding interrogation techniques. One of the politicians fanning this flame in the press has been New York Senator Charles Schumer. Yet, during a Senate hearing in 2004 he proclaimed the following about 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 should 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'". But that was 5 years ago – when that position served his purpose.

And how about our favorite – the SHORTUS? Her support and later denial of knowing about these interrogation techniques, and support for investigating those “in the know”, is blatant hypocrisy!

### **A Refreshingly Different View**

I was quite surprised to read Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson’s comments on the released memos. Rather than being the “smoking gun” that many critics tried to make these memos, Gerson felt they provided evidence that the Justice Department lawyers were really trying to find the right balance between competing moral priorities – protecting our citizens vs. the dignity of the human person. This seems to be a change for the former critic. He previously viewed harsh interrogations as a clear mistake – and now has reached a very different but thoughtful decision.

His thinking is logical and interesting as shown by this selection of comments: “The justice department memos disclose a different sort of deliberation (than what he expected) – a government struggling with similar worries (to his own) even after immense provocation; a government convinced that new attacks were imminent ... I respect many of those who say ‘never’ in regard to coercive interrogation ... But holding this view is not an option for those in government, charged with the protection of citizens. Adherence to this principle (i.e. ‘never’) could involve unwilling sacrifice for many others ... national security decisions are not made in retrospect ... There should be a broad presumption against harsh interrogations ... But perhaps in the most extreme cases – when the threat of a terrorist attack is clear and serious – American officials may need to employ harsh questioning, while protecting the terrorist from permanent injury. In broad outlines, this approach is consistent with the Justice Department memos.”

I like him a lot better after that thoughtful, logical and compelling analysis.

### **What If?**

Based on the information obtained from interrogating (using WB) KSM ( see the GLOSSARY), a plan for a 9/11 sort of attack on L.A. was foiled. I don’t think that is disputed by anyone. But what if this attack hadn’t been foiled? Jeff Jacoby offers the logical argument that if thousands had been murdered in California, what would the discussion be? Suppose it became apparent that WB was available for interrogation, but W avoided it because of concerns of public criticism. Might some of those now in STAM’FORM and many in COTUS have created psychological whiplash by blasting W and others in his administration for NOT using WB to prevent a second bloodbath? You bet your little BIPPY (better check the GLOSSARY) they would have!

### **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 WB 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 WB, and similar techniques, in situations of extreme importance to national security or lives of Americans.

I was asked recently, “Well then, what is torture?” My reply, “I’m not sure, but I’ll know it when I see it”. I really should be able to do better than that! Since then, I have given it more serious thought. My layman’s working definition is, I believe, logical and reasonable. I believe 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. I must add that a technique that is done to punish, or out of sadistic cruelty, is terribly wrong even if that line is not crossed. Therefore there must be a compelling national security or life threatening situation to justify using a technique such as WB. Under my definition of what may be acceptable under certain 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.

*Next time – a look at GITMO.*

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### **GLOSSARY of GOVSPEAK (Language of the Government)**

– The following are presented in what I consider a logical order – not alphabetically.

**POTUS** – President of the United States

**P-BOB** – President Barack Obama

**THE ONE** – Another name for P-BOB

**MESSIAH** – One more name for P-BOB

**W** – Former POTUS, George W. Bush

**POTUS(-1)** – Same as W

**FLOTUS** – First Lady of the United States

**M-BOB** – Michelle Obama

**DO-P-OTUS** – Daughters of the President of the United States (say: “dopy Otis”)

**FFOTUS** – First Family of the United States (pronounced with an opening “flutter”)

**FIDO-TUS** – First Dog of the United States – FFOTUS’s pet (say: “fido t’us”)

**DA-VEEP** – Vice President Joe Biden

**DA-VEEP(-1)** – Dick Cheney

**DA-VEEP(-2)** – Al Gore

**COSE** – Chief of Staff (Rahm) Emanuel (pronounced “cozy”)

**SECS** – Secretary of State (would that be Hillary?) (pronounced “sex”)

**T-SEC** – Treasury Secretary what’s his name

**T-SEC(+1)** – Whoever replaces the T-SEC

**T-SEC(-1)** – The former T-SEC

**CHA-FED** – Chairman of the Federal Reserve

**AGOTUS** – Attorney General of the United States

**STAM’FORM** – Stable of the Misinformed (i.e. all members of P-BOB’s administration)

**PEP** – Precipitous Environmental Programs (pronounced “pep”)

**P-PPPPP** – P-BOB’s Penchant for Pushing Precipitous and Peculiar Programs (say: “pee pep”)

**TOTUS** – Teleprompter of the United States  
**HE-SINGN** – Conveys the “head swiveling” while at the TOTUS (pronounced “he singin”)  
**PATOTUS** – P-BOB’s position at the Teleprompter of the United States  
**COTUS** – Congress of the United States  
**SOTUS** – Senate of the United States  
**HORTUS** – House of Representatives of the United States (pronounced “whore t’us”)  
**SHORTUS** – The (Loud) Speaker of HORTUS, Nancy P  
**J-SECOTUS** – Joint Session of Congress of the United States (say: jay secotus)  
**SCOTUS** – Supreme Court of the United States  
**GITMO** – That place that P-BOB just don’t ‘git’  
**WB** – Popularly known as “waterboarding” – the technique P-BOB just don’t ‘git’  
**BIPPY** – That place that many in STAM’FORM sometimes put their brain containers  
**KSM** – Khalid Sheikh Mohammed – the senior terrorist enjoying time at GITMO (say: “kiss ’im)

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More comments will follow on important topics and personal thoughts as our President battles through tough territory. I want to join other conservatives in recognizing and respecting our new President – and supporting him when we should. When we oppose our President’s policies, we should act in accordance with values of decency – but that doesn’t preclude a healthy dose of sarcasm and satire, which are valuable tools for political commentary.

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*I extend thanks, as always, to the many writers, commentators, researchers, and others, from both political extremes, whose hard work helps me greatly. They gather details and individually present so much information. About all I do is gather, organize, summarize, and then attempt to fill in with additional comments – commonly referred to as my frequent “RANTS”.*