

## SPEAKER PELOSI SHOWS DEMOCRATS POLITICAL WEAKNESS REGARDING CIA ENHANCED INTERROGATION METHODS

By: Anthony Joseph Sacco, Sr. © June 2009

PINE BLUFFS - As the Senate concluded its first week of controversial hearings on recently released Bush Administration documents dealing with so-called harsh interrogation tactics, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's (D-CA) approval ratings continued their steady decline. Since she began feuding with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) about "enhanced interrogation techniques," a CNN/Opinion Research Corporation survey released May 19 found that her approval has dropped from 51% in January, to 46% in March, and only 39% from May 14-17, when the survey was taken. Pelosi herself became the biggest story of the month of May 2009. She gained the spotlight by creating a controversy about when she learned of the tactics, how much she was told about them, and whether she approved or not.

In early May, Pelosi accused the CIA of lying to her in briefings back in 2002 and 2003 about techniques used to extract information from terrorists. She claimed she was told nothing about harsh techniques, although other representatives who attended the same briefings have stated that the CIA was up front about methods being used.

In an article written by Stephen Dinan of *The Washington Times* (5/25/2009), Representative Peter Hoekstra (R-MI) was quoted as saying "he can't be sure Mrs. Pelosi was told specifically about waterboarding in 2002, but enhanced interrogation techniques were usually talked about as a unit.

"He also said it's impossible to forget being briefed about harsh techniques. He said his first briefing on the subject was in the White House Situation Room, and the briefers actually demonstrated techniques such as a facial grasp.

"Mr. Hoekstra said Mrs. Pelosi as leader could easily have sought more information about the use of waterboarding, and he ridiculed her claim that there was nothing she could do to protest the techniques other than to win control of Congress back for the Democrats."

Pelosi has disputed what she actually knew and has claimed she had few options to object. But the key phrase in her denials is "few options." That means she acknowledges having known about waterboarding and that she understood she had some options available to register her objections. But, as the facts show, she did nothing.

What "options" were available? Here are just two: 1) a move to suspend or remove funding for offensive practices such as waterboarding from the CIA's budget through the House Appropriations Committee or the House Select Oversight Committee; 2) a letter of protest to the White House announcing her disapproval of these practices.

Why did she do nothing? Her reasons center around the aftermath of September 11. At the time, most Americans, including Republican and Democrat leaders in Congress, sought to prevent another terrorist attack on American soil. Reliable Intelligence – HUMINT – was necessary. So they turned a blind eye to "harsh interrogation techniques," accepting them as necessary in order to prevent a repeat performance by terrorists. And they were – necessary, I mean. On Sunday, May 10, 2009, former Vice-President Dick Cheney appeared on *Face the Nation* and defended controversial techniques such as waterboarding, saying that they were highly effective tools in extracting useful information from suspected terrorists. He cited Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who is accused of helping carry out the September 11 attacks on Washington and New York. "He did not cooperate fully until after waterboarding," Mr. Cheney said. "Once we went through that process, he produced vast quantities of invaluable information about al Qaida."

In Dinan's article, Hoekstra, top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, went on to say that in making her reckless accusations against the CIA, Speaker Pelosi has become "a wrecking ball to the morale of officers risking their lives in the field."

The Speaker, criticized for having known about the harsh techniques but failing to do anything to stop them, is now attempting to shift public attention away from her own conduct by excoriating the Bush Administration for approving them. At first Pelosi announced that she knew absolutely nothing about the use of "enhanced interrogation techniques." Top CIA personnel immediately disputed her claim. Later, she grudgingly admitted that she knew, but claimed the Agency told her it was only "considering" using waterboarding.

That subtle shift did not go unchallenged. Former CIA Director, Porter Goss, said that the Agency had informed Pelosi, in briefings, that it not only intended to use waterboarding, but that it had actually already done so. Goss further stated that the only objection raised by anyone during briefings was a concern as to whether the CIA was going far enough. Current CIA Director, Leon Panetta, an Obama appointee, agreed with Goss. "CIA officers briefed truthfully on the interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, describing the enhanced techniques that had been employed . . ." he said.

Pelosi's response to all this came near the end of May. Backing away from her earlier shaky position, she turned her venom into an attack on the former Bush Administration. "My criticism of the manner in which the Bush Administration did not appropriately inform Congress is separate from my respect for those in the intelligence community who work to keep our country safe," she said, after almost three weeks of accusing the intelligence community of lying, failing to identify those within that community she now "respects," and failing to identify exactly how the Bush Administration had not "appropriately informed Congress." She did, however, go on to say she no longer wants to stress the matter. That's not surprising in view of the battering she has taken from members of both parties: a bi-partisan effort, you might say. Further, on Friday, May 22, Speaker Pelosi refused to answer questions on the controversy she herself created. "I have made [all] the statements that I'm going to make on the subject," she said.

Ever the political animal, Pelosi did her about face after her own party leaders voted on May 20 to keep Guantanamo prison open for the foreseeable future, forbid the transfer of detainees at that camp to the United States, and blocked funds contained in a \$96.7 billion Obama war spending bill for the closing of Guantanamo Bay prison where terrorist prisoners have been housed since the beginning of the War on Terror, and where 240 terrorists are still held.

In an abrupt shift of position, Democrat leaders in the Senate handed Mr. Obama a stunning defeat, voting overwhelmingly to strip the \$80 million the half-black President had requested to shutter the Cuba detention facility. The vote was 90-6, another bi-partisan action.

Democrats read polls and tend to fashion their policy decisions based upon the results, whether or not those results are in the best interests of the country. On January 20, 2009, a Gallup poll revealed that Americans were leaning against closing Guantanamo. 45% said it should not be closed, 35% said it should be closed, and 20% had no opinion on the matter. On April 27, 55% of Americans said they favored the use of harsh interrogative techniques. Pelosi received poor marks: only 31% approved of the way she had been handling the matter while 47% disagree with her handling of it.

These polls have led to increased pressure from members of both parties expressing concern for their constituents and wondering where the detainees would be moved. Recall that Mr. Obama has been asking European countries to accept the suspected terrorist detainees, only to suffer stern rebukes. His fall back position has been that he would bring them into the United States and place them in civilian prisons, a move strongly rejected by almost every community in the nation except for tiny Hardin, Montana. There, faced with hard times, local officials offered to accept Guantanamo's castoffs. It seems Hardin has a brand new but empty \$27 million 464-bed prison, which the Town had

built thinking that the rest of the state would pay to house their prisoners. That proffer was quickly rescinded, however, by both Montana's Democrat Senators and its one Republican House member.

Mr. Obama's move is also opposed by many prominent personages. Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) was unequivocal on the matter, insisting that terrorism suspects will never reach American shores: "You can't put them in prison unless you release them," he said. "We will never allow terrorists to be released in the United States."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has been outspoken for weeks on the subject. On Tuesday, May 19, he said he hoped the Democrat decision to de-fund the closing was a prelude to keeping the camp open and dangerous terrorism suspects offshore where they belong. "Guantanamo is the perfect place for these terrorists," he said. "However, if the President ends up sticking to his decision to close it next January, obviously they need a place to be. It ought not to be the United States of America."

Also weighing in was FBI Director Robert Mueller. Appointed by President Bush in 2001 for a ten-year term, he told a congressional panel that he had concerns about bringing Guantanamo Bay detainees to prisons in the U.S. Among the risks he cited is "the potential for individuals undertaking attacks on those prisons in the United States" to free their fellow terrorists.

And Senator Lamar Smith (R-TX) said: "No good purpose is served by allowing terrorists, who trained at terrorist training camps, to come into the U.S. and live among us. Guantanamo Bay was never intended to be an Ellis Island."

As noted above, President Obama campaigned on a promise to close Guantanamo, claiming that it was somehow an embarrassment to us before our allies around the world. Apparently that's because some prisoners there have been exposed to so-called "harsh interrogative techniques," which Mr. Obama alleges amount to torture. Without explaining why this was so, he recently promised to close the facility by January 22, 2010. And that same Harry Reid, on May 20, in laying out his party's rationale for stripping the funds from the funding bill said, "Guantanamo makes us less safe." He didn't explain why, either and since many of the 240 prisoners remaining in "Gitmo" are considered too dangerous to release, Reid should be asked why keeping them there makes us less safe.

Democrat verbal attacks on the CIA, enhanced interrogation techniques, and the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, together with the Senate hearing just begun in Washington, will leave this country more vulnerable to potential terrorist attacks. Dismantling the policies and protections begun by the Bush Administration after

September 11 is neither wise nor prudent. In view of the recent poll showing that 37% of those previously released from Guantanamo have returned to their terrorist ways, releasing more of them is a valid concern. Furthermore, making public secret memoranda outlining our interrogation methods flies in the face of reason since it will provide our enemies with valuable data about what to expect if captured.

Republican leaders should strongly oppose all Democrat efforts in this regard. "You can't play politics with national security," former Cheney advisor Mary Matalin said. "Obama is clearly on the defensive here. He turned this into a values fight. This is not about moral relativism. Evil people want to kill innocents. Seeking to defend ourselves is not an abrogation of our values."

Indeed, that a free society does not have to sit back and allow itself to be destroyed by its enemies, but can take all necessary and prudent means to defend itself, is a lesson the United States learned early in the Cold War. That lesson should be applied here.

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