

Torture: Beyond The Pale

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The image of CIA officers demonstrating and detailing torture techniques considered for use during detainee interrogations in the White House is one most Americans could probably never conceive. And yet, ABC News reported last week that senior Bush administration officials were privy to such presentations in the Situation Room as they discussed and approved the brutal treatment (such as waterboarding) of terror suspects. They also approved combining various techniques to be used on a suspect.

Included in the group were Vice President Dick Cheney, then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice (currently a lead contender for vice president on the Republican ticket), former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and ex-Secretary of State Colin Powell. Regarding the use of the techniques, Rice told the CIA: "This is your baby. Go do it," as though assigning a casual project or giving a pep talk.

Former Attorney General John Ashcroft was also part of this committee, and while he was fine with the torture techniques, he was uncomfortable with the fact that the White House knew so much about them — doing so blows the whole "plausible deniability" argument. A former intelligence official told The Associated Press that the meetings were timed to the Justice Department memos approving the use of the techniques.

We agree with the American Civil Liberties Union calling for a congressional investigation into the matter. The fact that we torture suspects is unacceptable. That the White House reviewed and approved the techniques is beyond the pale.

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