

Panetta Confirms Again That Waterboarding Helped Get Bin Laden; Media Still Confused

☒ On Sunday, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta confirmed what many have believed since the death of Osama Bin Laden: Our waterboarding of top Al Qaeda operatives in the wake of 9/11 ultimately led to the whereabouts and killing of the terrorist mastermind.

Speaking to Chuck Todd on NBC's *Meet the Press*, Panetta revealed the information when asked about the accuracy of Kathryn Bigelow's latest film, *Zero Dark Thirty*, which depicts the hunt for Bin Laden.

"The real story was that in order to put the puzzle of intelligence together that led us to Bin Laden, there were a lot of pieces out there that were a part of that puzzle," said Panetta. "Yes, some of it came from some of the tactics that were used at the time, *interrogation* tactics that were used."

Panetta went on to remark that other intelligence factors outside of the harsh interrogations were instrumental as well, and expressed that he *thinks* we would have eventually got Bin Laden anyway.

Panetta's admission has received a lot of media attention since Sunday morning, but it's difficult to understand exactly why. After all, this wasn't the first time Panetta credited enhanced interrogation techniques (including waterboarding) as having contributed to the successful raid on the Bin Laden compound. He also did so back in May of 2011, when speaking with NBC's Brian Williams.

Panetta certainly isn't the only one who has declared that the waterboarding of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Abu Zubaydah, and Abd

al-Rahim al-Nashiri provided our intelligence agencies with invaluable information in our efforts against Al Qaeda. A host of other distinguished intelligence professionals have stated the same thing, including John Kirakou, Michael Hayden, Jose Rodriguez, and Michael Scheuer, whose insistence has been that some of that intel even prevented planned terrorist attacks both here and abroad. In addition, director Kathryn Bigelow's presentation of the information gathered as a result of waterboarding came directly from unprecedented civilian access to U.S. intelligence reports granted to her by President Obama himself.

Yet, when inquiring if waterboarding contributed to the Bin Laden operation, Chuck Todd seemed as if he was asking a question he didn't already know the answer to, or perhaps one that he was half-expecting to be answered with a "no".

I think that's revealing.

It suggests that when it comes to passionate, controversial subjects like waterboarding, there is a certain willful ignorance from the media (and certainly from people outside of the media as well) that accompanies a desperate need to be *right* on an issue, even when the facts tell them they're wrong.

Case in point, there are still many people in this country who insist that the waterboarding *didn't* work, and that we received no useful information as a result of it. For some reason, it has never been enough for opponents of the practice to stick with just a moral or legal argument for why we shouldn't have subjected three high-ranking terrorists to waterboarding (which is a legitimate debate). Instead, these people have felt compelled to deny the effectiveness of enhanced interrogation, and they are so immersed and invested in that narrative that no amount of proof will ever convince them that they're wrong.

As a wise man once said, "Lying is what we do in order to live with our delusions."

One has to only perform a Google News search on the Panetta interview to find more media examples of what I'm saying:

Tom McKay of PolicyMic.com wrote a [column](#) entitled: "Leon Panetta On 'Meet the Press': Torture is *Not* What led to Bin Laden's Capture."

How does McKay explain his intriguing interpretation that waterboarding did *not* lead to Bin Laden? He writes that because Panetta described the interrogation intel as only being one piece of many pieces in a puzzle, it *alone* did not lead "directly" to Bin Laden.

With all due respect to Mr. McKay... OF COURSE it didn't lead *directly* to Bin Laden! If it had, we would have found him years ago! The interrogation intel made up the initial (arguably the most important) pieces of the puzzle that Panetta described, so it was clearly significant.

Mackenzie Weinger from The Politico made [a similar observation](#) to McKay's, [as did](#) Jake Miller from CBS News. None of the three are willing to concede *any* credit to waterboarding, simply because *all* credit can't be applied.

Adalia Woodbury of PoliticusUSA.com [went a step further](#), running with the headline: "Panetta Obliterates The Myth That Torture Led to Bin Laden".

Obliterates? Really? Woodbury explains that because Panetta *thinks* that we *could* have eventually found Bin Laden *without* enhanced interrogation techniques, the fact that those techniques did indeed place our intelligence agencies on the right path is somehow worthy of being categorized as a "myth".

Are you confused as I am?

One has to wonder if such hardened denials don't just stem

from instinctive ideological beliefs, but also from the fear of having to concede that the controversial policies of George W. Bush might actually deserve a decent amount of credit for finding Bin Laden.

Regardless, this kind of mindset has sadly become commonplace not only in the media, but also in how everyday people engage in political discourse. We're losing our ability to begin an argument with a mutually accepted set of facts. These days, when one side feels their position may not be as strong as they'd like it to be, they deem it acceptable to simply spin reality into a false premise that better favors their argument. Then, they fool themselves into believing that false premise is true. The result is a perpetuation of falsehoods that, in some cases, were long ago disproved.

It's tiresome, and emblematic of why we can't deal with serious problems in this country.

The good news is that regardless of some people's inability to admit it, waterboarding saved many American lives and helped bring the man responsible for the deaths of nearly three thousand people on 9/11 to justice.

No amount of denials can overturn those results, and thank goodness for that.