

Withdrawn/Redacted Material

Obama Presidential Library

DOCUMENT NO.	FORM	SUBJECT/TITLE	PAGES	DATE	RESTRICTION(S)
001	Email	Subject: Classification Challenge Appeal... - To: Allen, Rebecca DISL OSD OUSDI, et al - From: William Bosanko	1	11/12/2008	P5; P6/b6;
002	Email	Classification Challenge Appeal Received - From: William Carpenter	1	10/30/2008	P6/b6;
003	Email	Appeal of Security Classification - To: TC	2	10/21/2008	P6/b6;
004	Letter	[Letter] - From: Walter J. King	1	ND	P6/b6;

COLLECTION TITLE:

Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel (ISCAP)

SERIES:

General Files

FOLDER TITLE:

Camerino, Tony, Maj., USAFF Classification Challenge "How to break a terros *2008-039 2009-002

FRC ID:

53591

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

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- A. Closed by Executive Order 13526 governing access to national security information.
- B. Closed by statute or by the agency which originated the document.
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Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
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- b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

Records Not Subject to FOIA

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Withdrawal Marker

Obama Presidential Library

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**This marker identifies the original location of the withdrawn item listed above.
For a complete list of items withdrawn from this folder, see the
Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet at the front of the folder.**

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Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel (ISCAP)

SERIES:

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FOIA IDs and Segments:

OA Num.:

NARA Num.:

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Mail Envelope Properties (491ADE11.66B : 0 : 63489)

Subject: Classification Challenge Appeal re Pre-Publication Review
Creation Date 11/12/2008 8:45:53 AM
From: William Bosanko

Created By: William.Bosanko@nara.gov

Recipients	Action	Date & Time
osd.mil Deborah.Ross (Deborah D Ms CIV OSD OUSDI Ross) Rebecca.Allen (Rebecca J DISL OSD OUSDI Allen)		
whs.mil AM david.daley (David CIV WHS/ESD Daley)	Transferred	11/12/2008 8:46:15

Post Office	Delivered	Route
	Pending	osd.mil whs.mil

Files	Size	Date & Time
MESSAGE	2079	11/12/2008 8:45:53 AM

Options

Auto Delete: No
Expiration Date: None
Notify Recipients: Yes
Priority: Standard
ReplyRequested: No
Return Notification: None

Concealed Subject: No
Security: Standard

To Be Delivered: Immediate
Status Tracking: Delivered & Opened

washingtonpost.com

I'm Still Tortured by What I Saw in Iraq

Advertisement

By Matthew Alexander
Sunday, November 30, 2008; B01

I should have felt triumphant when I returned from Iraq in August 2006. Instead, I was worried and exhausted. My team of interrogators had successfully hunted down one of the most notorious mass murderers of our generation, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq and the mastermind of the campaign of suicide bombings that had helped plunge Iraq into civil war. But instead of celebrating our success, my mind was consumed with the unfinished business of our mission: fixing the deeply flawed, ineffective and un-American way the U.S. military conducts interrogations in Iraq. I'm still alarmed about that today.

I'm not some ivory-tower type; I served for 14 years in the U.S. Air Force, began my career as a Special Operations pilot flying helicopters, saw combat in Bosnia and Kosovo, became an Air Force counterintelligence agent, then volunteered to go to Iraq to work as a senior interrogator. What I saw in Iraq still rattles me -- both because it betrays our traditions and because it just doesn't work.

Violence was at its peak during my five-month tour in Iraq. In February 2006, the month before I arrived, Zarqawi's forces (members of Iraq's Sunni minority) blew up the golden-domed Askariya mosque in Samarra, a shrine revered by Iraq's majority Shiites, and unleashed a wave of sectarian bloodshed. Reprisal killings became a daily occurrence, and suicide bombings were as common as car accidents. It felt as if the whole country was being blown to bits.

Amid the chaos, four other Air Force criminal investigators and I joined an elite team of interrogators attempting to locate Zarqawi. What I soon discovered about our methods astonished me. The Army was still conducting interrogations according to the Guantanamo Bay model: Interrogators were nominally using the methods outlined in the U.S. Army Field Manual, the interrogators' bible, but they were pushing in every way possible to bend the rules -- and often break them. I don't have to belabor the point; dozens of newspaper articles and books have been written about the misconduct that resulted. These interrogations were based on fear and control; they often resulted in torture and abuse.

I refused to participate in such practices, and a month later, I extended that prohibition to the team of interrogators I was assigned to lead. I taught the members of my unit a new methodology -- one based on building rapport with suspects, showing cultural understanding and using good old-fashioned brainpower to tease out information. I personally conducted more than 300 interrogations, and I supervised more than 1,000. The methods my team used are not classified (they're listed in the unclassified Field Manual), but the way we used them was, I like to think, unique. We got to know our enemies, we learned to negotiate with them, and we adapted criminal investigative techniques to our work (something that the Field Manual permits, under the concept of "ruses and trickery"). It worked. Our efforts started a chain of successes that ultimately led to Zarqawi.

Over the course of this renaissance in interrogation tactics, our attitudes changed. We no longer saw our prisoners as the stereotypical al-Qaeda evildoers we had been repeatedly

briefed to expect; we saw them as Sunni Iraqis, often family men protecting themselves from Shiite militias and trying to ensure that their fellow Sunnis would still have some access to wealth and power in the new Iraq. Most surprisingly, they turned out to despise al-Qaeda in Iraq as much as they despised us, but Zarqawi and his thugs were willing to provide them with arms and money. I pointed this out to Gen. George Casey, the former top U.S. commander in Iraq, when he visited my prison in the summer of 2006. He did not respond.

Perhaps he should have. It turns out that my team was right to think that many disgruntled Sunnis could be peeled away from Zarqawi. A year later, Gen. David Petraeus helped boost the so-called Anbar Awakening, in which tens of thousands of Sunnis turned against al-Qaeda in Iraq and signed up with U.S. forces, cutting violence in the country dramatically.

Our new interrogation methods led to one of the war's biggest breakthroughs: We convinced one of Zarqawi's associates to give up the al-Qaeda in Iraq leader's location. On June 8, 2006, U.S. warplanes dropped two 500-pound bombs on a house where Zarqawi was meeting with other insurgent leaders.

But Zarqawi's death wasn't enough to convince the joint Special Operations task force for which I worked to change its attitude toward interrogations. The old methods continued. I came home from Iraq feeling as if my mission was far from accomplished. Soon after my return, the public learned that another part of our government, the CIA, had repeatedly used waterboarding to try to get information out of detainees.

I know the counter-argument well -- that we need the rough stuff for the truly hard cases, such as battle-hardened core leaders of al-Qaeda, not just run-of-the-mill Iraqi insurgents. But that's not always true: We turned several hard cases, including some foreign fighters, by using our new techniques. A few of them never abandoned the jihadist cause but still gave up critical information. One actually told me, "I thought you would torture me, and when you didn't, I decided that everything I was told about Americans was wrong. That's why I decided to cooperate."

Torture and abuse are against my moral fabric. The cliché still bears repeating: Such outrages are inconsistent with American principles. And then there's the pragmatic side: Torture and abuse cost American lives.

I learned in Iraq that the No. 1 reason foreign fighters flocked there to fight were the abuses carried out at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. Our policy of torture was directly and swiftly recruiting fighters for al-Qaeda in Iraq. The large majority of suicide bombings in Iraq are still carried out by these foreigners. They are also involved in most of the attacks on U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq. It's no exaggeration to say that at least half of our losses and casualties in that country have come at the hands of foreigners who joined the fray because of our program of detainee abuse. The number of U.S. soldiers who have died because of our torture policy will never be definitively known, but it is fair to say that it is close to the number of lives lost on Sept. 11, 2001. How anyone can say that torture keeps Americans safe is beyond me -- unless you don't count American soldiers as Americans.

After my return from Iraq, I began to write about my experiences because I felt obliged, as a military officer, not only to point out the broken wheel but to try to fix it. When I submitted the manuscript of my book about my Iraq experiences to the Defense Department for a standard review to ensure that it did not contain classified information, I got a nasty shock. Pentagon

officials delayed the review past the first printing date and then redacted an extraordinary amount of unclassified material -- including passages copied verbatim from the Army's unclassified Field Manual on interrogations and material vibrantly displayed on the Army's own Web site. I sued, first to get the review completed and later to appeal the redactions. Apparently, some members of the military command are not only unconvinced by the arguments against torture; they don't even want the public to hear them.

My experiences have landed me in the middle of another war -- one even more important than the Iraq conflict. The war after the war is a fight about who we are as Americans. Murderers like Zarqawi can kill us, but they can't force us to change who we are. We can only do that to ourselves. One day, when my grandkids sit on my knee and ask me about the war, I'll say to them, "Which one?"

Americans, including officers like myself, must fight to protect our values not only from al-Qaeda but also from those within our own country who would erode them. Other interrogators are also speaking out, including some former members of the military, the FBI and the CIA who met last summer to condemn torture and have spoken before Congress -- at considerable personal risk.

We're told that our only options are to persist in carrying out torture or to face another terrorist attack. But there truly is a better way to carry out interrogations -- and a way to get out of this false choice between torture and terror.

I'm actually quite optimistic these days, in no small measure because President-elect Barack Obama has promised to outlaw the practice of torture throughout our government. But until we renounce the sorts of abuses that have stained our national honor, al-Qaeda will be winning. Zarqawi is dead, but he has still forced us to show the world that we do not adhere to the principles we say we cherish. We're better than that. We're smarter, too.

howtobreakaterrorist@gmail.com

Matthew Alexander led an interrogations team assigned to a Special Operations task force in Iraq in 2006. He is the author of "How to Break a Terrorist: The U.S. Interrogators Who Used Brains, Not Brutality, to Take Down the Deadliest Man in Iraq." He is writing under a pseudonym for security reasons.

Post a Comment

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Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

From: William Carpenter
To: [REDACTED] P6/b(6)
Date: 10/30/2008 3:33:06 PM
Subject: Classification Challenge Appeal Received

Tony Camerino:

The staff of the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel (ISCAP) has received your appeal of the decision of the Office of Security Review at the Department of Defense that portions of your manuscript contain classified national security information. We will evaluate your case and keep you informed of the progress of your appeal.

--Bill Carpenter, ISCAP Staff

William C. Carpenter
Program Analyst
Information Security Oversight Office
National Archives and Records Administration
Washington, DC
Phone: 202-357-5466
Fax: 202-357-5908

From: "T C" [redacted] - - - [redacted] P6/b(6)
To: <iscap@nara.gov>
Date: Tue, Oct 21, 2008 12:02 PM
Subject: Appeal of Security Classification

Executive Secretary, ISCAP
C/O Information Security Oversight Office
The National Archives Building
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Room 500
Washington, D.C. 20408

To ISCAP Executive Secretary,

I am filing an appeal of the redactions in my manuscript, *How to Break a Terrorist: The U.S. Interrogators Who Used Brains, Not Brutality, to Take Down the Deadliest Man in Iraq*, written under my pseudonym Matthew Alexander. I submitted my manuscript to the DoD Office of Security Review (OSR) on 16 July 2008. OSR reviewed my manuscript and replied on 29 August 2008 asking for an extension to 18 September 2008. On 19 September 2008, OSR returned my manuscript with 93 redactions.

I filed an appeal to the redactions on 22 September 2008 and submitted extensive justifications. On 14 October 2008, OSR replied and acknowledged that 80 of the 93 redactions were unjustified, but added three additional redactions of names of characters they had already approved for release.

I filed a second appeal for six of the remaining thirteen redactions and the names already cleared on 15 October 2008, with added justifications. OSR replied on 17 October 2008 standing by their redactions and stating that they could not share with me the reasons behind their decisions because the classification guide itself is classified. I have made repeated offers throughout this process to meet with OSR to negotiate the redactions, but they have refused to do so.

The material in question that OSR redacted from my manuscript is open source information that I obtained not from my duties but from unclassified sources. For example, information was redacted from my manuscript that was obtained from the Army's own website (www.goarmy.com) and other information that is publicly available. In addition, information redacted from my manuscript was allowed in other publications reviewed and approved by OSR.

The extensive errors in the initial review (80 of the 93 original redactions were unjustified) points to an influence in this process that requires scrutiny. I believe that the organization that I worked for and that conducted the review is using the redaction process in retaliation against me because of my view against torture. Recently, a senior official with access informed me that senior members of the reviewing organization are attempting to censor me through the review process. This is a direct violation of my First Amendment Right and an abuse of authority.

I am attaching the following supporting documents (a 2nd email forthcoming with the additional attachments):

Emails exchanged between Tony Camerino and OSR

OSR Extension Request

OSR Original Response and Redactions

1st Appeal to Redactions

OSR Response to 1st Appeal

2nd Appeal to Redactions

OSR Response to 2nd Appeal

3rd Appeal to Redactions

OSR Response to 3rd Appeal

Justifications Spreadsheet (the six yellow highlighted items are the items in dispute)

US Army Special Operations Command Information Paper on A/MH-6 Little Bird Helicopters

US Army Webpage Extract (Psychological Operations Specialist)

P6/b(6)

I can be reached at [redacted] or [redacted]

Sincerely,

Tony Camerino, Maj, USAFR



**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF SECURITY REVIEW
1155 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1155**

Ref: 08-S-2205

Dear Mr. Camerino:

This interim letter is a partial response to your request for security review of your manuscript, "How to Break a Terrorist." Also reference your telecom with our Ms. Beth Fitzgibbons on August 29, 2008 regarding the review of this case.

The purpose of this letter is to officially inform you that DoD has found sensitive information in your manuscript, and regrettably cannot at this time provide a final clearance for public release.

I therefore recommend that you request an extension from your publisher until at least September 18, 2008. The Department of Defense (DoD) is in the final stages of this review and anticipates sending a complete response back to you by this date. It is important that this sensitive information not be released to the public.

Please direct any questions regarding this case to Ms. Beth Fitzgibbons at
 c-mail-address: ----- P6/b(6)


Walter J. King
Acting Chief

p.2
Zuhair
Alexander

REWARD
Up to \$10,000,000 USD
ABU MUSAB AL ZARQAWI



This man is wanted for murdering innocent women and children.

This terrorist born in Jordan also goes by the names:
 Ahmed Al Kalaylah,
 Fadel Nazal Al Khalaylah,
 Abu Musab Al Zarqawi,
 Abu Musaa Al Zarhawi

778-4076 Inside Bagdad
01-778-4076 Inside Iraq
964-01-778-4076 Outside Iraq
Email: tips@orha.centcom.mil

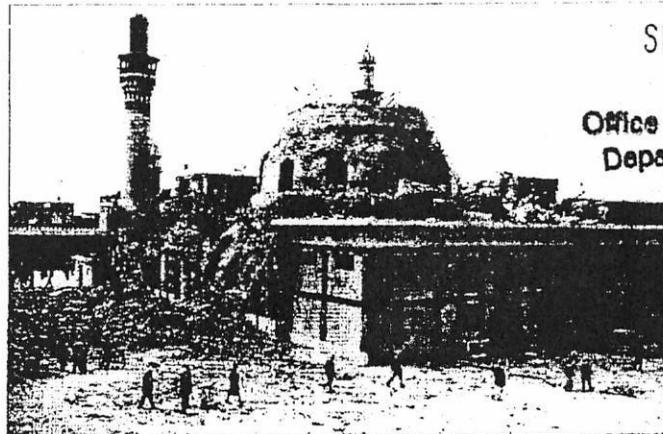
Your identity will remain secret.

The reward poster. A reward of \$10,000,000 was offered for information leading to Zarqawi's capture. No reward was ever paid.

CLEARED
For Open Publication

SEP 18 2008 **B**

Office of Security Review
Department of Defense



On February 22, 2006, members of Al Qaida in Iraq blew up the Golden Mosque in Samarra, also known as Al Askari Mosque, one of the holiest Shia shrines. The destruction incited a civil war between Sunni and Shia.

ALL PHOTOS OPEN SOURCE EXCEPT LAST TWO.



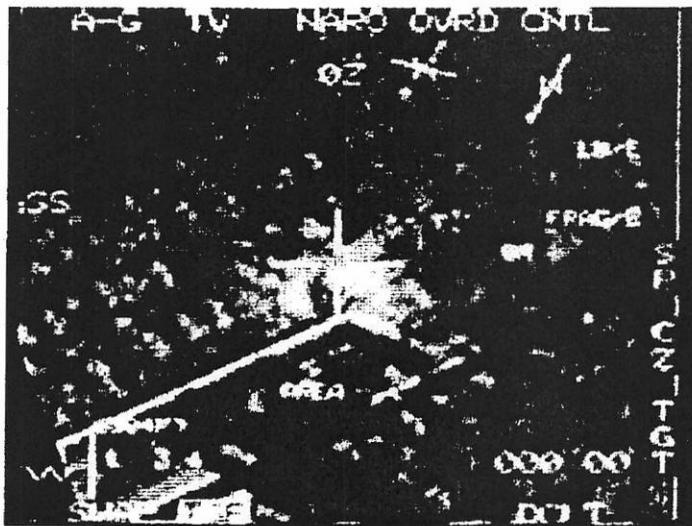
From the video captured at Naji's house showing Zarqawi unable to reload a M249 semiautomatic weapon. This unedited footage was released by Coalition Forces to discredit Zarqawi.



Zarqawi delivering his message of intolerance.
From the same video.



Sheikh Abu 'Abd al Rahman, Zarqawi's spiritual advisor, and Abu Haydar's lifelong friend.



The air strike on Zarqawi's safe house. U.S. Air Force F-16s dropped two 500-pound laser-guided bombs on the house.



The remains of Zarqawi's safe house.



The deceased Zarqawi.



Iraqi soldiers celebrating the news of Zarqawi's death.



The new leader of Al Qaida in Mesopotamia,
Abu Ayyub al Masri.



The author. [REDACTED]



The author. Taken at Baghdad International Airport in April 2003.

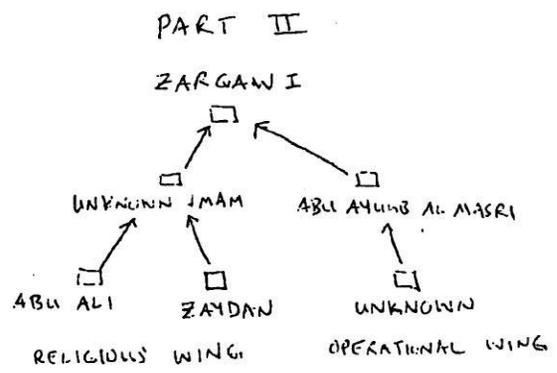
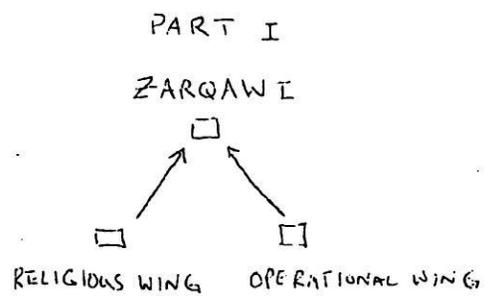
JUL 25 08 11:11a

TONY

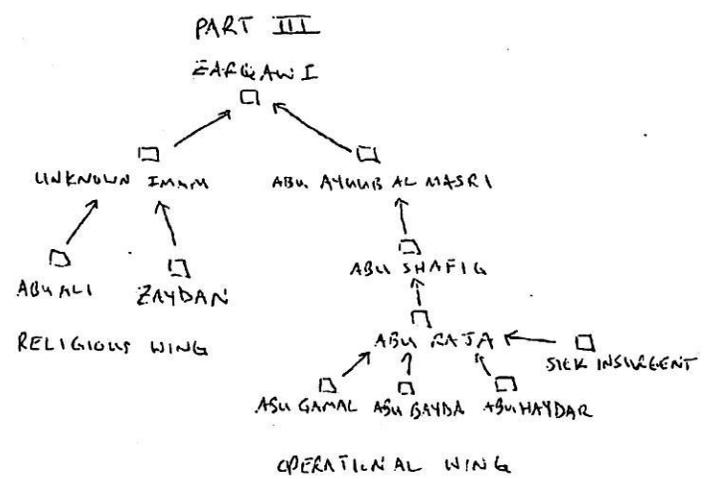
2027583PMS

P.9

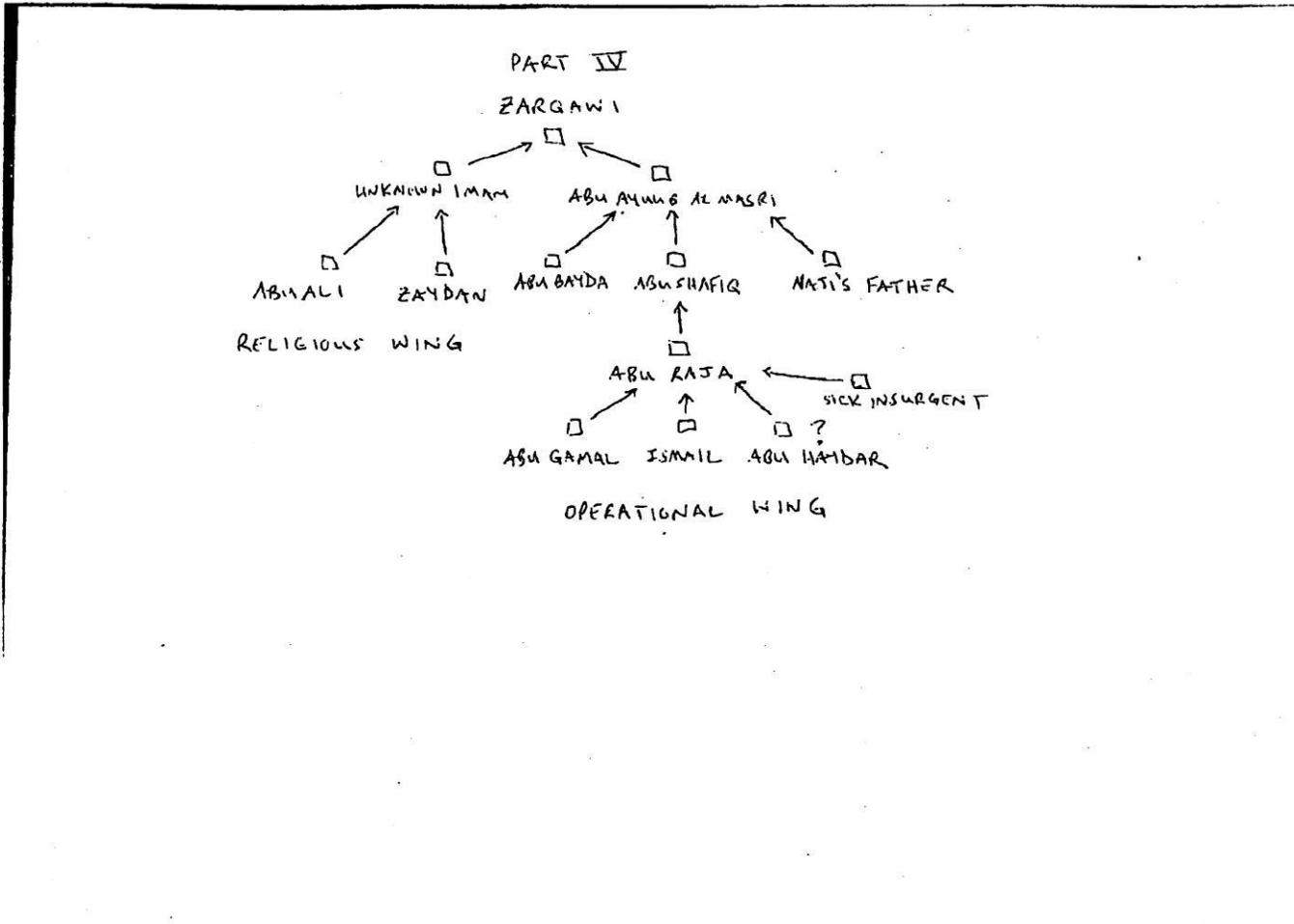
Part I out of the group

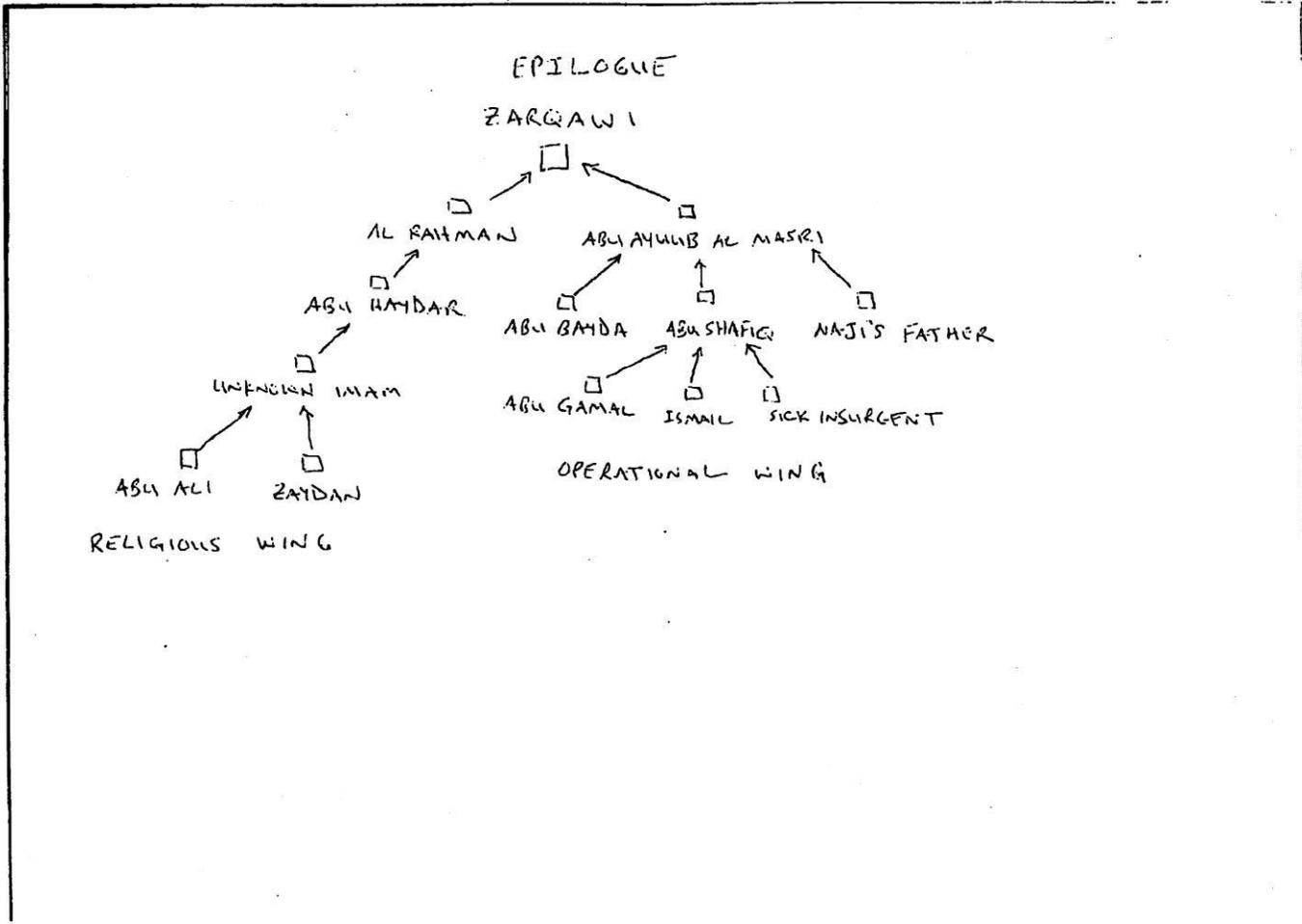


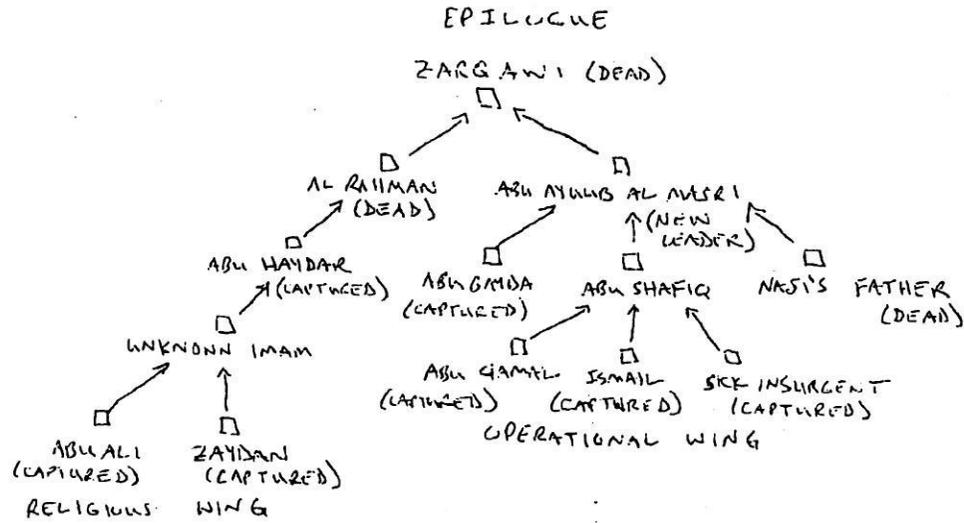
All diagrams created (fictional) by author.



Part IV Diagram









DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF SECURITY REVIEW
1155 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1155

SEP 18 2008

Ref: 08-S-2205

Mr. Mark S. Zaid, Esq.
Mark S. Zaid, P.C.
1250 Connecticut Avenue NW
Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Zaid:

This letter responds to your client's security review request of the manuscript entitled, "How to Break a Terrorist." It is addressed to you, since the author Mr. Matthew Alexander (pseudonym) did not provide his home address when he delivered the manuscript to our office on July 16, 2008, or when supplemental photos were delivered on July 25, 2008.

The Department of Defense (DoD) has completed the security review of the manuscript. The manuscript is cleared for public release except for the classified material marked in black on the attached unclassified copy. This material is currently and properly classified in accordance with Executive Order 13292 of March 25, 2003--Further Amendment to Executive Order 12958, as Amended, Classified National Security Information, Section 1.4(c), and (g). The redacted material was removed because it concerns specific intelligence activities, sources, methods, or vulnerabilities.

Failure to comply voids our clearance for publication.

A redacted, unclassified copy of the manuscript is enclosed. Please direct any questions regarding this case to Ms. Beth Fitzgibbons, Office of Security Review, at [redacted] e-mail address: [redacted]

P6/b(6)

Sincerely,

Walter J. King
Acting Chief

Enclosure:
As stated

How to Break a Terrorist

The U.S. Interrogators Who Used Brains, Not
Brutality, to Take Down the Deadliest Man in Iraq

by ~~Matthew~~ Alexander
with John Bruning

ADVANCE UNCORRECTED MANUSCRIPT - NOT FOR SALE

CLEARED
For Open Publication

SEP 18 2008
AS AMENDED

Office of Security Review
Department of Defense

P1 only

*Killing the Hydra**Fall, 2006*

The ocean looks sweet today, with perfect rollers that break fifty yards from shore. The sun-burnished beach stretches for miles in each direction. I am home, which for me is where the waves are.

This is my time. I've lived a nomadic, sometimes fierce existence in the service of my country. I have rarely had a place to call my own, so I return to these shores after every deployment to find solace. My mind clears and I can make sense of all the things that have happened to me since my last visit.

After my time in Iraq, there is much I need to consider. I step into the froth at the edge of the waterline. A few splashes, and I'm waist deep in the balmy ocean. I study the way the waves are breaking. I'm alone on this beach. The weekend families, the bikini-clad women are hours from taking up space in the sand.

I suppose everyone who returns from Iraq must carry their own personal demons. Mine have haunted me since the day Zarqawi died in our air strike.

The strike team reached the house less than a dozen minutes after the bombs reduced it to smoking rubble. As the special operators jumped from the Little Birds, two Iraqis emerged from the wreckage carrying a stretcher between them. Zarqawi lay on top of it and when he saw American soldiers approaching he tried to roll off the stretcher and get away, even as he coughed up blood. A special operator grabbed him and held him in place. As more blood poured from his mouth into the sand around him, his lungs collapsed. He looked up into his enemy's eyes and died.

Smoke can clear, another explosion tears through the remains of the house.

Cliff runs and makes a phone call. The feed ends. We all look around at each other. *Is it over? Did we get him?*

Minutes drag by while we're left in suspense. Finally, an officer walks into the Pit.

"Ladies and Gentlemen: We got him. Abu Musab Al Zarqawi is dead."

The strike team brought his corpse to the compound along with Al Rahman's. Abu Haydar had pleaded with Mary and Tom to keep Al Rahman, his closest friend, safe. He died in the blast and they later told Abu Haydar. His reaction was the same as Abu Al's — total emotional collapse.

I saw Zarqawi's body later that day. He lay on the floor at my feet. He looked remarkably intact. The bombs had collapsed his lungs, but he had no external injuries save a few cuts.

Not long after that, the entire interrogations unit was called into the conference room for a briefing from a senior colonel and his deputy, a major. They were high-level intelligence officers for the command, but I'd only seen them a couple of times before during VIP visits. The colonel addressed us with a back handed compliment, "You all did great work here," he told us, "even though this all came down to just a few interrogators." I wasn't sure what he meant, or who he meant, until I learned that Mary, Lenny, Tom and Cliff were subsequently called into the commanding general's office and awarded medals. Lenny, as the only military person, was given a Bronze Star. Finally, a light bulb went on in my head. I finally knew who tied Randy's hands and why Roger wouldn't discipline Lenny.

The next day, I walked past Mary in the Gator Pit, who called me over to her computer. "Does this girl look like Al Masri?" she asked me.

On her screen was a photo of a dead child. A girl. Her crushed head lay amid the rubble of the house. I looked away, ashamed and horrified. Two children died in the bombing. Nobody knew who they were.

For me it doesn't matter. I own a part of their deaths, and I will carry that guilt for the rest of my life.

The sun is low on the eastern horizon. The water ahead is glittering gold from its reflection. I step into deeper water. The smaller swells bulge across me on their way to the waterline. I slip onto my board and start to paddle.

Killing Zarqawi dealt a blow to Al Qaida in Iraq, but it didn't end the suicide bombings. The news still holds tales of horrified shoppers struggling from the wreckage of once thriving Baghdad marketplaces. We didn't save the day as our leadership had hoped we might.

But an organization can only take so much damage. In the wake of Zarqawi's death, we launched sudden strikes all over Baghdad, Yusufiya and Anbar Province. Our intelligence brought down dozens of cells and networks. Suicide bombings plummeted for a month. I would like to think that with Zarqawi's death, we helped make Iraq a little safer, even if only for a little while. We brought justice. And we saved lives. Over a year later, General Petraeus reached out to Sunni nationalists and armed them, finally delivering on my promise to Abu Haydar to work together and forget the past, and many Sunnis have in fact turned on Al Qaida. Perhaps an ultimate showdown between Shia and Sunni still looms on the horizon, but with negotiation and understanding, the Iraqi people might someday learn to live together again.

In the meantime, the Hydra still lives. Al Masri took over for Zarqawi, and nothing changed in the Compound but the target. I left the Compound not long afterward to work with a Stryker brigade in the north of Iraq along with Mike, one of the agents I had deployed with. We took part in raids, interrogated detainees at the point of capture.

and expanded on the new methods. I carried an M4 and strapped on my Kevlar every night as we left the wire. I felt free out there with the soldiers, far from the politics of our gator unit, and I felt that we were making a difference. But it was nothing like that one day in June when I played a role in the death of the most wanted man in Iraq.

I find the sweet spot in the swells. I swing my board around and start paddling hard. The next wave rushes toward me, taking shape in the otherwise amorphous ocean. I watch it over my shoulder, timing my next move. The base takes shape, it starts to curl.

In a heartbeat, I'm on my feet, the board aligned below. Then I'm shooting down the face of the wave as the curl breaks behind me. It is a glorious moment full of translucent sunshine and the perfume of salt water.

The ride ends, and I start paddling for the next wave. I am free again, and one day, I will make sense of it all and feel whole.

The little girl's face still darkens my conscience. An accident, yes. I would like to think we are better than that, but war is random and ugly and innocent people get hurt in many ways.

I think back to those meetings in Abu Haydar's cell. Those moments crystallized for me the importance of our new techniques. They give us flexibility, empathy, and information. Those are the real weapons of the War on Terror. We don't have to become our enemies to defeat them.

I see Abu Haydar again. He leans into me as I speak into his ear, the guard nearby none the wiser to the secret deal we've struck. And therein lies the most important truth of this new age of warfare.

A few words, furtive and whispered, can change the world.

*Killing the Hydra**Fall, 2006*

The ocean looks sweet today, with perfect rollers that break fifty yards from shore. The sun-burnished beach stretches for miles in each direction. I am home, which for me is where the waves are.

This is my time. I've lived a nomadic, sometimes fierce existence in the service of my country. I have rarely had a place to call my own, so I return to these shores after every deployment to find solace. My mind clears and I can make sense of all the things that have happened to me since my last visit.

After my time in Iraq, there is much I need to consider. I step into the froth at the edge of the waterline. A few splashes, and I'm waist deep in the balmy ocean. I study the way the waves are breaking. I'm alone on this beach. The weekend families, the bikini-clad women are hours from taking up space in the sand.

I suppose everyone who returns from Iraq must carry their own personal demons. Mine have haunted me since the day Zaraqawi died in our air strike.

The strike team reached the house less than a dozen minutes after the bombs reduced it to smoking rubble. As the special operators jumped from the Little Birds, two Iraqis emerged from the wreckage carrying a stretcher between them. Zaraqawi lay on top of it and when he saw American soldiers approaching he tried to roll off the stretcher and get away, even as he coughed up blood. A special operator grabbed him and held him in place. As more blood poured from his mouth into the sand around him, his lungs collapsed. He looked up into his enemy's eyes and died.

Smoke can clear, another explosion tears through the remains of the house.

Cliff runs and makes a phone call. The feed ends. We all look around at each other. *Is it over? Did we get him?*

Minutes drag by while we're left in suspense. Finally, an officer walks into the Pit.

"Ladies and Gentlemen: We got him. Abu Musab Al Zaraqawi is dead."