

Michael Gelles- Coercive Techniques Produce Unreliable Information

This was this whole aggressive, coercive tactics to get information. So if you establish sort of a situation where somebody experiences learned helplessness, you're going to get information. I mean, and to say that by waterboarding and using some of these coercive tactics, they probably got lots of information. Yes, so if that was the metric, very successful.

Now, show me if you vetted that information, how much of that was really accurate, reliable, or just wasn't made up, because we knew people, we know people who are tortured will tell you anything. And as a result of that, there's the biggest risk. You want to get engaged in any type of aggressive or coercive tactic, creating a situation where the person feels a total loss of control and a total sense of learned helplessness, you're going to get information. The question is what kind of information you're going to get. That's why this rapport-based approach was very important because you establish a relationship and really what you were doing was you were – to some extent, violating the expectation of the detainee. They really expected you to be – and then you weren't. And by having a relationship and being able to have conversations and talk about themes that were important to them, they develop a relationship with you. Now, once I have a relationship with you with that culture, very important that I don't disappoint you or bring shame upon myself. So I would give information if the questions were asked right.

I mean, there weren't any lawyers, there weren't a lot of lawyers supporting this stuff. I mean, because like anything else, how are we ever going to try these folks? What're we ever going to do with them?

Interviewer: Well, I'm not sure that Cheney and Yoo and...?

They didn't care about that. They didn't care about that. They wanted the information in the moment because they believe they needed to protect America. I understand that, totally understand that. In fact, I would say too, I don't really care if they ever prosecute these guys but please, take an approach that is moral and ethical on some level but also get accurate and reliable information.

And I'm quick to say that I've said that before. The moral and the ethical thing, sure, there's an element to that. But the accurate and reliable information, quite frankly, more important, much more important.