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OPINION

Pelosi as martyr

BY RICH LOWRY

Next, Nancy Pelosi should find a way to work in the Bilderberg Group, the annual gathering of global elites that is a perennial obsession of conspiracy theorists. It's the only thing missing from her wild tale of CIA misconduct that's so implausible, she had trouble keeping it straight at her instantly notorious "I was misled" press conference.

For Pelosi's account to be accurate, the CIA must have engaged in one of the most baroque and ineffectual conspiracies in the history of Washington. Remember: Pelosi claims that the CIA lied to her in a September 2002 classified briefing and told her that it hadn't waterboarded high-level al-Qaida detainee Abu Zubaydah. To support her version, Pelosi needs to stack implausibility on top of implausibility in a precarious Jenga tower of self-justification.

The CIA must have convinced Porter Goss, the Republican congressman (and subsequent CIA director) who was present at the 2002 briefing, to lie and pronounce himself "slack-jawed" at Pelosi's account. It must have forged the "contemporane-

ous records" CIA Director Leon Panetta has cited that show Pelosi was told of the waterboarding. It must have either pulled the wool over Panetta's eyes or enlisted the active engagement of the Obama nominee in a monstrous machinery of deception.

Even Oliver Stone wouldn't touch this screenplay. And why would the CIA have lied to Pelosi in 2002? Even in her telling, the briefers informed her that the enhanced interrogation techniques had been found to be legal. So there was no wrongdoing to cover up. And even by Pelosi's account, the CIA told one of her aides in a February 2003 briefing that it had used waterboarding, and the aide passed it along to her. It's pointless to lie to the principal when a few months later you are going to funnel the information to her through a subordinate. In short, Pelosi has uncorked Washington's least believable and most internally inconsistent denial since Bill Clinton wagged his finger over "that woman."

Pelosi's motivation for putting her reputation — and perhaps her speakership — on the line is more subtle than Clinton's. She is sacrificing her credibility on the altar of

moral vanity and rhetorical excess. She is trapped under the terrible freight of the word "torture," the left's obligatory swear-word for the Bush interrogation program.

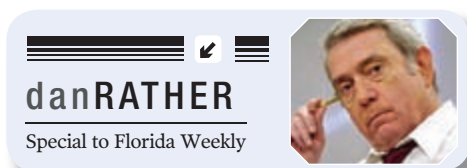
Torture is a war crime, and anyone complicit in it is a war criminal. It admits of no wiggle room. For Pelosi to acknowledge she knew of torture as far back as 2002 and did nothing to stop it is to condemn herself as an unindicted co-conspirator in George W. Bush's crimes. Better to obfuscate and dodge, and remain adamant about a "truth commission," even when she can't tell the truth herself.

Pelosi's inaction years ago speaks more eloquently than her denunciations of the Bush administration since. Even if she was uncomfortable with the use of waterboarding, she clearly didn't consider it torture. If she had been told that the CIA was burning detainees with cigarettes, would she also have implicitly approved? Let's hope not. But given the choice between forswearing the simplistic and morally self-gratifying attack on Bush as a torturer, and hurling herself on a pyre in front of the national press corps, Pelosi chose self-immolation. ■

— Rich Lowry is editor of the *National Review*.

GUEST OPINION

Confronting the Pakistan riddle



The closer one looks at the U.S. fight against the Taliban and al-Qaida, the more one appreciates the gap between intentions hatched in Washington and the realities on the ground. We have been hearing for years about the complex web of loyalties that crisscross and interconnect these two nations; now, as President Barack Obama looks to refocus U.S. strategy, we're seeing once again how the same native forces that often frustrated the Bush administration's efforts can do the same for a new White House security team.

As was the case during the Bush years, Pakistan remains perhaps the greatest frustration. Without Pakistan's help, there's no way to fight Islamic extremists in the region. But when we enlist the aid of Pakistan, we are asking for the help of the nation that created the Taliban and whose intelligence service is widely believed to maintain ties to it and related insurgent groups in the region.

Solving the riddle that is Pakistan has become ever more urgent, as the U.S. and

NATO military presence in Afghanistan during the past eight years has pushed Taliban forces over the porous border between these two countries. Our force levels in Afghanistan are rising, but in Pakistan we must continue to rely primarily on the desultory efforts of the Pakistani military, supplemented by covert CIA and U.S. military efforts.

If getting military aid from Pakistan has so far been a frustrating experience, so has the U.S. experience with giving aid to Pakistan. During the waning years of the Bush administration, numerous questions were raised about whether military and other aid money given to Pakistan was going to where the U.S. intended — to the fight against the Taliban — or whether it was instead being used to defend against India, which Pakistan regards as its greatest enemy and threat.

These questions have been given renewed urgency by a *New York Times* report last week examining Pakistan's bolstering of its nuclear arsenal, and by questions raised in the Senate about whether continued aid to Pakistan would be spent on nuclear arms rather than on fighting the Taliban. Several senators have called for putting constraints and conditions on proposed aid, but one might consider that money is fungible; the money the U.S.

gives to augment Pakistan's fight against the Taliban could just as easily end up replacing Pakistan's share, freeing its government to spend elsewhere.

That Pakistan might be using U.S. aid dollars, even indirectly, to expand its nuclear forces is of special concern, given the surmounting worry that Pakistan's nuclear weapons could fall into terrorist hands.

This week, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced an aid package that, by channeling money through the United Nations and nongovernmental organizations rather than Pakistan's government, seems to acknowledge and attempt to get around this problem. But the aid in question is largely humanitarian relief directed at refugees from the fighting between Pakistan and insurgent forces in Pakistan's Swat Valley; military aid, which Pakistan will continue to request and which we will no doubt feel we need to supply, will by necessity have to flow through Islamabad — and from there, who can say where it will go?

Such are the pitfalls of having to wage war through a proxy — much less a proxy that, in the case of Pakistan, we are asking to fight against its own former proxy, the Taliban. We are operating in a part of the world where allegiances have less to do with nationality than with tribal and other less-detectable affiliations, and where little is as it seems. ■

GUEST OPINION

Make motorcycle safety a priority

One out of every nine U.S. road fatalities accounted for last year involved motorcycle riders.

That's why it's so important that Harley-Davidson/Buell of Fort Myers and Naples Harley-Davidson are joining with other federal, state and local highway safety, law enforcement, and motorcycle organizations in proclaiming May 2009 as Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. All motorists are reminded to be extra

alert when driving to help keep everyone safe.

Motorcyclists are much more vulnerable than passenger vehicle drivers. Research shows that approximately 80 percent of motorcycle crashes injure or kill a motorcycle rider, while only 20 percent of passenger car crashes injure or kill a person in their vehicle. In fact, per vehicle mile traveled in 2006, motorcyclists were 35 times more likely than

passenger car occupants to die in a motor vehicle traffic crash.

Motorcyclists have responsibilities, too, by following the rules of the roadway and being alert to other drivers. Too often after a crash, the drivers of other vehicles involved say they never saw the motorcyclist and were unable to respond in time. Get involved and help make this the first year in recent years when motorcycle fatalities do not increase. ■

Scott Fischer
CEO and owner, Scott Fischer Enterprises