



ABC NEWS

"CIA - ABU ZUBAYDAH"

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN KIRIAKOU

CORRESPONDENT: BRIAN ROSS

MEDIA ID: TAPE #2

JOHN:

(IN PROGRESS) It-- it-- we didn't go after him because he was Abu Zubaydah. We went after him because he just happened to be in Pakistan and we thought there was a chance we could catch him.

BRIAN ROSS:

And did he know where bin Laden was?

JOHN:


No. No idea. Hadn't seen bin Laden in six months. Hadn't spoken to him in four months, didn't have any idea.

BRIAN ROSS:

And how about-- Kalid Sheik Mohammed (PH)? Did he have a sense of him?

JOHN:

I was already gone by then. But my-- my guess is



no. They're very stove piped, very compartmentalized. They're-- almost no one knows where anyone else is. They have this system of couriers that they use to communicate. They're never on the-- they're never on the phone. They-- it's-- they're-- they're real pros.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)




BRIAN ROSS:

And-- but he continued to be and continues to be a resource?

JOHN:

I've been outta the agency for awhile now, for almost four years now. When-- when I left, he-- he was still a good resource to go to.





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BRIAN ROSS:

And people were valuing what he said?

JOHN:

They were.

BRIAN ROSS:

Was he ever caught in a lie?

JOHN:

No.



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BRIAN ROSS:

An exaggeration?

JOHN:

No. And we-- we really ran down everything that he said. Obviously, there are other sources to-- to corroborate-- things. And this is one way that you're able to vet the people that you're speaking with. And to the best of my recollection, he never led us down the wrong path.



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BRIAN ROSS:

Were there any other-- tricks of the trade that you used to try to get him to talk?

JOHN:

No. That was it. It was pretty straightforward. And the reason why we didn't use other tricks of the trade is because those-- those tricks of the trade require a great deal of time-- much of the time. And we didn't have that luxury. We were afraid that there was another major attack coming.

We were afraid that there would be an attack on U.S. soil. And we felt that we really needed to get to the bottom of what he knew quickly so we could disrupt those-- those possible attacks.


BRIAN ROSS:

And were those fears realized? You think there was, in fact, another major attack--

(OVERTALK)


JOHN:

I do. I think al-Qaeda is always planning



another major attack. I think that this is an ongoing battle that we're gonna be fighting for the next generation, at least. And it's always going to be a game of one-upmanship. We always have to have information that is at least as good as what they're planning. It's the only way that we can-- that we can stop these attacks.

BRIAN ROSS:



But given that you felt that-- water-boarding (?) and the enhanced interrogation broke him, if you-- if somebody else was caught today, wouldn't you wanna use those same techniques?


JOHN:

I think that I would be very tempted to use the same techniques. I--

BRIAN ROSS:

In other words, in your view, they-- they do work?

JOHN:



I-- yes, they do work.

BRIAN ROSS:

No doubt about that?



JOHN:

But like a lot of Americans, I think I-- I'm involved in this-- this internal, intellectual battle with myself weighing the idea that water-boarding may be torture, versus the quality of information that we-- that we often get after using the water-boarding technique. And I struggle with it, I think like a lot of people do, where like I said earlier, we're Americans and we're better than this. And we shouldn't be doing this kinda thing.

But at the same time, what happens if we don't water-board a person and we don't get that nugget of information, and there's an attack on a-- on a movie theater or a shopping mall or-- or in midtown Manhattan, you know, at rush hour? Then-- then what do we do? I-- I would have trouble forgiving myself.



BRIAN ROSS:

We've reported that the director of the CIA-- Michael Hayden (PH), has banned water-boarding at

least for now.

JOHN:

Yes.

BRIAN ROSS:

Hasn't been used.

JOHN:

Yes.

BRIAN ROSS:

And maybe since-- Kalid Sheik Mohammed. Did he make the right decision, do you think?

JOHN:


I think he probably did. I-- I think--

BRIAN ROSS:

I don't think it's permanently banned. But for the moment, it is.


JOHN:

For the moment, it is. I think that we've-- we've gotten up and running-- to the-- to the extent that we're-- we have enough information coming in from an-- enough different kinds of sources that we do have a handle on-- on al-Qaeda operations as they're being planned, at least



right now. And that water-boarding is unnecessary.

You know, the-- the months after September 11th were different. Because we were-- we were really reactive at the time. And we were-- we were stunned by the-- by the magnitude of-- of the attacks on September 11th. And we were afraid that something of-- of equal-- scope was-- was in the works.



And we were really trying to do anything that we could to stop another major attack from happening. I don't think we're in that mindset right now. I think we're chasing them all over the world. I think we've had a great deal of success chasing them, not just by ourselves but with other-- with other governments. And-- as a result, water-boarding, at least right now, is unnecessary.



BRIAN ROSS:

And it's your view that al-Qaeda has been foiled,

that it wasn't because they couldn't do it again
but because--

JOHN:

I think we--

BRIAN ROSS:

--you think it's by the U.S. and others stopped
them--

JOHN:


--we've disrupted them, yes. There are hundreds
and hundreds of patriotic Americans working for
very little money with no vacation and no sleep
and no time with their families, working in
horrible parts of the world just to make sure
that another attack doesn't occur.

BRIAN ROSS:

Why did you leave the CIA? Were you upset with
yourself, what you did?

JOHN:

No. I loved the CIA. I still love the CIA. But
I'm a middle-aged guy. I have four children.
And I wanted to spend more time with my family.
And I thought that, you know, there-- there's



more to life than just running to the four corners of the earth on six hours' notice to meet some terrorist. And-- I just wanted to spend more time at home.


BRIAN ROSS:

Very good then. Thank you very much.

JOHN:

Thank you for having me.

BRIAN ROSS:



Anything else you wanna say or you think is important?

JOHN:

I wish you the best of luck in this. This is--


BRIAN ROSS:

Okay.

JOHN:

--an important story.

BRIAN ROSS:



Okay.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

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