By Robyn E. Blumner

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Since leaving office, Cheney has been crowing with 24-like bravado that the Bush administration policies of mistreating prisoners and exposing Americans to "what do you have to hide?" surveillance kept the United States from another terrorist attack.

How sad for him that as official reports emerge, they say it isn't true.

On the use of "enhanced interrogation techniques," Cheney said on CBS's *Face the Nation* bac k in May that he had "no regrets." "I am convinced, absolutely convinced that we saved thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of lives," he told interviewer Bob Schieffer.

But that was not the conclusion of the CIA inspector general. Although the full 2004 IG report on abusive interrogations has not yet been released publicly (watch for its release late next month), Justice Department lawyers have quoted from it as saying "it is difficult to determine conclusively whether interrogations provided information critical to interdicting specific imminent attacks."

Then add to that an April report of the Senate Armed Services Committee that describes how military people gave repeated warnings that the intelligence extracted through abusive techniques was "less reliable" than that gained by traditional interrogation methods. And don't forget FBI director Robert Mueller's explosive statement that he believes no attacks on America

were disrupted by any information gleaned from abusive interrogations. It appears Cheney's claims are as hollow as his heart.

Meanwhile Attorney General Eric Holder was so sickened by reading the 2004 IG report and its graphic descriptions of what the CIA and private contractors did to the imprisoned men in their charge that he is now reconsidering his opposition to appointing a criminal prosecutor to investigate.

All that suffering inflicted, and no significant security gains to show for it. That's Dick Cheney's legacy.

The use of illegal domestic warrantless surveillance is another area where Cheney insisted that America abandon its traditional civil liberties protections. His justification once again was that "thousands of lives" were at stake. He told this to a Justice Department official who questioned the program's legality and was reluctant to approve it, according to a recently released report by the inspectors general of five federal agencies, including the National Security Agency and the CIA.

But the intelligence agencies' report on the NSA's warrantless surveillance program didn't back Cheney up. Instead it found that other espionage methods provided more timely and useful information on terrorist threats than what was obtained from the NSA program.

The report said that most intelligence officials "had difficulty citing specific instances" when any intelligence obtained from the warrantless surveillance program led to a counterterrorism success. And CIA officials complained that the stuff they got from the program was often "vague or without context."

All those law-abiding Americans with their privacy invaded, all those intelligence resources wasted, and without demonstrable security gains. That's Dick Cheney's legacy.

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And it says a lot about Cheney that this is his idea of honor. I'm sure he also thought it honorable for his chief aide to leak the name of CIA officer Valerie Plame, and to hide from Congress information on a covert terrorist assassination program.

As Cheney prepares to tell his side of the story in book form, he will have few official sources to back him up. So far, the investigations and reports of Bush administration tactics all suggest that Cheney's judgment was deeply flawed. He was a dangerous man who has thankfully been put out to pasture. Now the old guy needs to fade away.

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