The battle against baseless, worthless grants of anonymity by journalists is, at this point, probably futile, since even many of the nation's best and most valuable reporters -- such as The New Yorker's Jane Mayer -- seem helplessly addicted to it. In an otherwise solid and at times enlightening article on CIA Director Leon Panetta and his resistance to investigating past CIA abuses, Mayer includes this passage at the beginning of her article to explain how Panetta was chosen only after Obama's first choice, John Brennan, was rejected:

> A friend of Brennan's from his C.I.A. days complained to me, "After a few Cheeto-eating people in the basement working in their underwear who write blogs voiced objections to Brennan, the Obama Administration pulled his name at the first sign of smoke, and then ruled out a whole class of people: anyone who had been at the agency during the past ten years couldn't pass the blogger test."

What possible justification is there to grant anonymity to someone to spout these clichéd and factually false insults? First, as I've documented numerous times and as Mayer herself well knows, the case against Brennan was not that he was "at the agency for the past ten years" or even that he had anything to do with the torture program, but rather that (as she herself documents later in the piece) he explicitly advocated and defended many of the worst torture techniques and other Bush abuses. Second, unlike the individual who is willing to spout these insults only while cowardly hiding behind Mayer's shield of anonymity, the bloggers who led the opposition to Brennan (including myself and The Atlantic's Andrew Sullivan) all attached their names to their views and -- as Spencer Ackerman notes -- are about as far away as one can be from the trite, adolescent cartoons spewed by Mayer's anonymous insulter. Third, one of the principal points of Mayer's long article is that the objections to Brennan have been vindicated, because -- as Obama's chief counter-terrorism adviser -- he has led the way in urging Obama to keep past CIA abuses suppressed and Bush crimes protected from accountability.

More...