

May 19, 2013

When it comes to exposing administration incompetence, we are in a target rich environment. John Fund reviews the unfolding, cringe inducing tales of government idiots. Pickerhead never begrudged the president's golf rounds figuring if he was on the links that was less damage he could do to the country. Turns out though, he outsourced the presidency to Valerie Jarrett. It is easy to believe she was heavily involved in many of the things that have gone bad for the administration.

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Dana Milbank of the Washington Post tars him as a President Passerby who "seems to want no control over the actions of his administration." Milbank warns that "he's creating a power vacuum in which lower officials behave as though anything goes." Comedian Jon Stewart says Obama's government lacks real "managerial competence" and that the president is either Nixonian if he knew about the scandals in advance or a Mr. Magoo-style incompetent if he didn't.

But it was Chris Matthews of MSNBC who cut even deeper in his Hardball show on Wednesday. A former speechwriter for President Carter, he wondered if Obama "really doesn't want to be responsible day-to-day for running" the government. He savaged the White House for using "weird, spooky language" about "the building leadership" that must approve the Benghazi talking points. "I don't understand the model of this administration: weak chiefs of staff afraid of other people in the White House. Some undisclosed role for Valerie Jarrett. Unclear, a lot of floating power in the White House, but no clear line of authority. ..."

Kimberley Strassel details how the IRS scandal started with the one.

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Mr. VanderSloot is the Obama target who in 2011 made a sizable donation to a group supporting Mitt Romney. In April 2012, an Obama campaign website named and slurred eight Romney donors. It tarred Mr. VanderSloot as a "wealthy individual" with a "less-than-reputable record." Other donors were described as having been "on the wrong side of the law."

This was the Obama version of the phone call—put out to every government investigator (and liberal activist) in the land.

Twelve days later, a man working for a political opposition-research firm called an Idaho courthouse for Mr. VanderSloot's divorce records. In June, the IRS informed Mr. VanderSloot

and his wife of an audit of two years of their taxes. In July, the Department of Labor informed him of an audit of the guest workers on his Idaho cattle ranch. In September, the IRS informed him of a second audit, of one of his businesses. Mr. VanderSloot, who had never been audited before, was subject to three in the four months after Mr. Obama teed him up for such scrutiny.

The last of these audits was only concluded in recent weeks. Not one resulted in a fine or penalty. But Mr. VanderSloot has been waiting more than 20 months for a sizable refund and estimates his legal bills are \$80,000. That figure doesn't account for what the president's vilification has done to his business and reputation.

The Obama call for scrutiny wasn't a mistake; it was the president's strategy—one pursued throughout 2012. The way to limit Romney money was to intimidate donors from giving. Donate, and the president would at best tie you to Big Oil or Wall Street, at worst put your name in bold, and flag you as "less than reputable" to everyone who worked for him: the IRS, the SEC, the Justice Department. The president didn't need a telephone; he had a megaphone.

Weekly Standard learned from NBC's Lisa Meyer the IRS chose to hide the scandal until after the election.

*NBC's Lisa Myers reported this morning (**Friday**) that the IRS deliberately chose not to reveal that it had wrongly targeted conservative groups until after the 2012 presidential election:*

The IRS commissioner "has known for at least a year that this was going on," said Myers, "and that this had happened. And did he share any of that information with the White House? But even more importantly, Congress is going to ask him, why did you mislead us for an entire year? Members of Congress were saying conservatives are being targeted. What's going on here? The IRS denied it. Then when -- after these officials are briefed by the IG that this is going on, they don't disclose it. In fact, the commissioner sent a letter to Congress in September on this subject and did not reveal this. Imagine if we -- if you can -- what would have happened if this fact came out in September 2012, in the middle of a presidential election? The terrain would have looked very different."

Jennifer Rubin watched the latest press conference.

President Obama's press conference in the rain was not a success, if by success, his supporters would mean an event which convinces anyone who doesn't work for him that he's getting ahead of the scandal deluge. The sight of a Marine holding an umbrella over his head only added to the weirdness of the event.

So what did we learn?

1. He has full confidence in Attorney General Eric Holder, the man who purportedly recused himself (whenever) without putting it in writing (whatever). When asked about the untrammelled snooping on Associated Press reporters and editors, Obama said he doesn't talk about a "pending case" (except in numerous shootings, the IRS, etc., I suppose). He reiterated his intolerance of leaks. In other words, the great liberal icon is pleased ("no apologies") with an investigation that went far beyond anything previously undertaken against a media outlet.

2. He's going to get the Internal Revenue Service in tip-top shape. Still, it's an independent agency and all. (The willingness to show he is in charge is undercut by his insistence he had no idea what was going on there.)

3. His lip-service to the importance of a free press that holds him "accountable" suggests the most important attribute he now has is shamelessness. ...

Peter Wehner calls him the "ad hominem president."

1. President Obama is once again engaging in what psychiatrists refer to as projection, in which people lay their worst attributes on others.

In this instance, the most hyper-partisan president in modern times is ascribing that trait to Congressional Republicans. What we've learned about Mr. Obama over the years is that he that while he is unusually inept at governing, he's quite good at campaigning. He certainly enjoys it, having taken the concept of the Permanent Campaign beyond anything we've ever seen. It turns out it's the only thing he does well—no human being in history has raised campaign cash quite like he has—and it's all he seems interested in doing.

On some deep, subconscious level, though, Mr. Obama seems ashamed of the path he's chosen. And so the president projects those traits he loathes in himself on to others. To give you a sense of how deep the malady runs, the president does more than merely project; he actually preaches against the very character flaws he himself cannot overcome.

2. The president can hardly go a day without impugning the motivations of his opponents. They never have honest differences with the president. Instead they are suffering from an illness ("fever"), cowardice (afraid of what Rush Limbaugh might say about them), and lack of patriotism (caring about elections rather than future generations). Mr. Obama is the ultimate ad hominem president. ...

Dana Milbank called him "president passerby" and now he's turned his sights on the placeholder.

As the nation's top law enforcement official, Eric Holder is privy to all kinds of sensitive information. But he seems to be proud of how little he knows.

Why didn't his Justice Department inform the Associated Press, as the law requires, before pawing through reporters' phone records?

"I do not know," the attorney general told the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday afternoon, "why that was or was not done. I simply don't have a factual basis to answer that question."

Why didn't the DOJ seek the AP's cooperation, as the law also requires, before issuing subpoenas?

"I don't know what happened there," Holder replied. "I was recused from the case."

Why, asked the committee's chairman, Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.), was the whole matter handled in a manner that appears "contrary to the law and standard procedure"?

"I don't have a factual basis to answer the questions that you have asked, because I was recused," the attorney general said.

On and on Holder went: ...

Jennifer Rubin on the Holder faux recusal.

Attorney General Eric Holder told the House Judiciary Committee he recused himself from the leak investigation involving sweeping surveillance of the Associated Press because he was a "fact witness," meaning he had access to the classified data at issue and was questioned about it. But he can't recall when he recused himself. And it wasn't in writing. In one of the worst security leaks of which he is aware (he says), he never told the White House (he says) that he took himself out of the loop.

Remarkable really, even if true. John Yoo, who authored the enhanced interrogation memos in the Bush Justice Department and was widely criticized by the left for taking a broad view of executive power, was somewhat incredulous when I asked him about the Justice Department's behavior. As for the paperless recusal, he told me, "There must be something in writing to at least the DAG [deputy attorney general]."

Former attorney general Michael Mukasey agreed, emailing me that "it is inconceivable to me that you would not do it formally. Of course, you'd have to inform all the people who might otherwise have to contact you. Indeed, if you didn't you might conceivably come into possession of information you should not have." He added that "in the one case I can recall in which I recused myself I did it in writing. Hard to imagine how else you'd do it — shout 'I recuse myself' in your office? In the hall?"

But it is the unrestrained nature of investigation that is breathtaking, beyond anything Mukasey has seen, he told me. Yoo observed, "I cannot think of another example this broad that didn't turn out to be unauthorized. The only comparable thing was cases where a court tried to get a journalist to reveal a source. But I cannot think of the actual monitoring of reporters and editors." He added, "If something like that had ever come up during the Bush administration in my time at DOJ, I would have said it was unconstitutional." ...

As John Fund mentioned above, even Chris Matthews is starting to gag. Politico has the story.

President Obama "obviously likes giving speeches more than he does running the executive branch," Chris Matthews said tonight.

Yes, you read that right: The MSNBC host who in 2008 felt a "thrill going up my leg" after hearing Obama speak has grown disenchanted. Tonight's episode of Hardball saw Matthews delivering a rare, unforgiving grilling of the president as severe as anything that might appear on Fox News. ...

You can't make it up! [ABC News](#) tells us Sarah Hall Ingram, the IRS creep in charge of the tea party targeting, now runs the IRS health care office. Of course. *The Internal Revenue Service official in charge of the tax-exempt organizations at the time when the unit targeted tea party groups now runs the IRS office responsible for the health care legislation.*

Sarah Hall Ingram served as commissioner of the office responsible for tax-exempt organizations between 2009 and 2012. But Ingram has since left that part of the IRS and is now the director of the IRS' Affordable Care Act office, the IRS confirmed to ABC News today.

Her successor, Joseph Grant, is taking the fall for misdeeds at the scandal-plagued unit between 2010 and 2012. ...

And from the [Examiner](#) we learn Ingram got \$100,000 in bonus over the last three years.

Sarah Hall Ingram, the IRS executive in charge of the tax exempt division in 2010 when it began targeting conservative Tea Party, evangelical and pro-Israel groups for harrassment, got more than \$100,000 in bonuses between 2009 and 2012.

More recently, Ingram was promoted to serve as director of the tax agency's Obamacare program office, a position that put her in charge of the vast expansion of the IRS' regulatory power and staffing in connection with federal health care, ABC reported earlier today. ...

National Review

[Strange Goings-On at the White House](#)

A tight-knit inner circle plays all politics, all the time, while Obama remains disengaged.

by John Fund

The recent spate of Washington scandals has some liberals finally confessing in public what many of them have said privately for a long time. The Obama administration is arrogant, insular, prone to intimidation of adversaries, and slovenly when it comes to seeing that rules are followed. Indeed, the Obama White House is a strange place, and it's good that its operational model is now likely to be finally dissected by the media.

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Nixonian if he knew about the scandals in advance or a Mr. Magoo-style incompetent if he didn't.

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So if Obama is not fully engaged, who does wield influence in the White House? A lot of Democrats know firsthand that Jarrett, a Chicago mentor to both Barack and Michelle Obama and now officially a senior White House adviser, has enormous influence. She is the only White House staffer in anyone's memory, other than the chief of staff or national security adviser, to have an around-the-clock Secret Service detail of up to six agents. According to terrorism expert Richard Miniter's recent book, *Leading from Behind*: "At the urging of Valerie Jarrett, President Barack Obama canceled the operation to kill Osama bin Laden on three separate occasions before finally approving" the mission for May 2, 2011. She was instrumental in overriding then-chief of staff Rahm Emanuel when he opposed the Obamacare push, and she was key in steamrolling the bill to passage in 2010. Obama may rue the day, as its chaotic implementation could become the biggest political liability Democrats will face in next year's midterm elections.

A senior Republican congressional leader tells me that he had come to trust that he could detect the real lines of authority in any White House, since he's worked for five presidents. "But this one baffles me," he says. "I do know that when I ask Obama for something, there is often no answer. But when I ask Valerie Jarrett, there's always an answer or something happens."

Last month, *Time* broke new ground when it decided to throw the spotlight on Jarrett's influence, which the press till then had not much covered: The magazine named her one of the "100 most influential people in the world." Jeffrey Inmelt, the CEO of General Electric, gushed about Jarrett in an accompanying essay: "Above all else, however, and beyond all doubt, Valerie Jarrett is loyal."

No one doubts that President Obama has the White House management structure he wants; he has populated it with trusted aides such as Jarrett whose loyalty he can count on. But it's increasingly clear that this structure — supported by functionaries who are often highly partisan and careless — hasn't served the country well and hasn't received sufficient scrutiny from the media. That's why many liberals are openly expressing concern over the "mini-Politburo" at the White House — the small number of people who have centralized White House decision-making.

The Obama White House management team doesn't share the bunker mentality of the Nixon White House (though there are similarities). Nor does it have the frat-house atmosphere of the early Clinton White House, or the "happy talk" air of unreality of the latter George W. Bush administration. But its "all politics, all the time" ethos demands scrutiny now that the scandals are mounting and its shortcomings are becoming all too clear.

WSJ

The IRS Scandal Started at the Top

The bureaucrats at the Internal Revenue Service did exactly what the president said was the right and honorable thing to do.

by Kimberley A. Strassel

Was the White House involved in the IRS's targeting of conservatives? No investigation needed to answer that one. Of course it was.

President Obama and Co. are in full deniability mode, noting that the IRS is an "independent" agency and that they knew nothing about its abuse. The media and Congress are sleuthing for some hint that Mr. Obama picked up the phone and sicced the tax dogs on his enemies.

But that's not how things work in post-Watergate Washington. Mr. Obama didn't need to pick up the phone. All he needed to do was exactly what he did do, in full view, for three years: Publicly suggest that conservative political groups were engaged in nefarious deeds; publicly call out by name political opponents whom he'd like to see harassed; and publicly have his party pressure the IRS to take action.

Mr. Obama now professes shock and outrage that bureaucrats at the IRS did exactly what the president of the United States said was the right and honorable thing to do. "He put a target on our backs, and he's now going to blame the people who are shooting at us?" asks Idaho businessman and longtime Republican donor Frank VanderSloot.

Mr. VanderSloot is the Obama target who in 2011 made a sizable donation to a group supporting [Mitt Romney](#). In April 2012, an Obama campaign website named and slurred eight Romney donors. It tarred Mr. VanderSloot as a "wealthy individual" with a "less-than-reputable record." Other donors were described as having been "on the wrong side of the law."

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The last of these audits was only concluded in recent weeks. Not one resulted in a fine or penalty. But Mr. VanderSloot has been waiting more than 20 months for a sizable refund and estimates his legal bills are \$80,000. That figure doesn't account for what the president's vilification has done to his business and reputation.

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The same threat was made to conservative groups that might dare play in the election. As early as January 2010, Mr. Obama would, in his state of the union address, cast aspersions on the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* ruling, claiming that it "reversed a century of law to open the floodgates for special interests" (read conservative groups).

The president derided "tea baggers." Vice President Joe Biden compared them to "terrorists." In more than a dozen speeches Mr. Obama raised the specter that these groups represented nefarious interests that were perverting elections. "Nobody knows who's paying for these ads," he warned. "We don't know where this money is coming from," he intoned.

In case the IRS missed his point, he raised the threat of illegality: "All around this country there are groups with harmless-sounding names like Americans for Prosperity, who are running millions of dollars of ads against Democratic candidates . . . And they don't have to say who exactly the Americans for Prosperity are. You don't know if it's a foreign-controlled corporation."

Short of directly asking federal agencies to investigate these groups, this is as close as it gets. Especially as top congressional Democrats were putting in their own versions of phone calls, sending letters to the IRS that accused it of having "failed to address" the "problem" of groups that were "improperly engaged" in campaigns. Because guess who controls that "independent" agency's budget?

The IRS is easy to demonize, but it doesn't exist in a vacuum. It got its heading from a president, and his party, who did in fact send it orders—openly, for the world to see. In his Tuesday press grilling, no question agitated White House Press Secretary Jay Carney more than the one that got to the heart of the matter: Given the president's "animosity" toward *Citizens United*, might he have "appreciated or wanted the IRS to be looking and scrutinizing those . . ." Mr. Carney cut off the reporter with "That's a preposterous assertion."

Preposterous because, according to Mr. Obama, he is "outraged" and "angry" that the IRS looked into the very groups and individuals that he spent years claiming were shady, undemocratic, even lawbreaking. After all, he expects the IRS to "operate with absolute integrity." Even when he does not.

Weekly Standard

[Report: IRS Deliberately Chose Not to Fess Up to Scandal Before Election](#)

"[I]f this fact came out in September 2012, in the middle of a presidential election? The terrain would have looked very different."

by Daniel Halper

NBC's Lisa Myers reported this morning that the IRS deliberately chose not to reveal that it had wrongly targeted conservative groups until after the 2012 presidential election:

The IRS commissioner "has known for at least a year that this was going on," said Myers, "and that this had happened. And did he share any of that information with the White House? But even more importantly, Congress is going to ask him, why did you mislead us for an entire year? Members of Congress were saying conservatives are being targeted. What's going on here? The IRS denied it. Then when -- after these officials are briefed by the IG that this is going on, they don't disclose it. In fact, the commissioner sent a letter to Congress in September on this subject and did not reveal this. Imagine if we -- if you can -- what would have happened if this

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Right Turn

[When it rains, it pours: Ten press conference take aways](#)

by Jennifer Rubin



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2. He's going to get the Internal Revenue Service in tip-top shape. Still, it's an independent agency and all. (The willingness to show he is in charge is undercut by his insistence he had no idea what was going on there.)
3. His lip-service to the importance of a free press that holds him "accountable" suggests the most important attribute he now has is shamelessness.
4. He wouldn't say that the White House had no previous knowledge of IRS wrongdoing. Instead he said he didn't have any knowledge of the *Inspector General's report* before it was released.
5. He brought up funding for our embassies, referencing Benghazi, Libya. But of course we know that funding shortages had nothing to do with the fiasco that transpired. For claiming otherwise my colleague Glenn Kessler awarded Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) [three](#) Pinocchios.

6. The president reiterated the same blather he's been putting out on Syria. ("We're going to keep increasing the pressure on the Assad regime and working with the Syrian opposition. ... And we're going to keep working for a Syria that is free from Assad's tyranny.") There was no indication the regime's use of chemical weapons has changed his inertness on the topic.

7. Mainstream media reporters no longer pretend all is well and that scandals are a figment of conservatives' imagination. [Peter Baker of the New York Times](#): "Thwarted on Capitol Hill, stymied in the Middle East and now beset by scandal, President Obama has reached a point just six months after a heady re-election where the second term he had hoped for has collided with the second term he actually has. . . . He presides over a government that to critics appears ever more intrusive, dictating health care choices, playing politics with the Internal Revenue Service and snooping into journalists' phone records. Yet at times, Mr. Obama comes across as something of a bystander occupying the most powerful office in the world, buffeted by partisanship and forces beyond his control." Or maybe just not being truthful?

8. He said he won't relent and appoint an [independent prosecutor on the IRS scandal](#).

9. Obama wasn't asked about his whereabouts on the night of the Sept. 11, 2012, Benghazi attack, the dissembling about the video that Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said set off the attacks in Libya or about his administration's negligence in anticipating al-Qaeda terrorism in Libya even after other governments pulled their people out.

10. Mainstream media reaction to the president's handling of the scandals ranges from [bad](#) to [terrible](#). Sure there are some very creative excuse-makers for the president, but they are now in the decided minority.

Contentions

[Obama is the Ultimate Ad Hominem President](#)

by Peter Wehner

At a fundraising event earlier this week in New York City, President Obama said [this](#):

What's blocking us right now is a sort of hyper-partisanship in Washington that I was, frankly, hoping to overcome in 2008. My thinking was when we beat them in 2012 that might break the fever, and it's not quite broken yet. But I am persistent. And I am staying at it. And I genuinely believe there are Republicans out there who would like to work with us but they're fearful of their base and they're concerned about what Rush Limbaugh might say about them...

As a consequence we get the kind of gridlock that makes people cynical about government. My intentions over the next 3 ½ years are to govern. ... If there are folks who are more interested in winning elections than they are thinking about the next generation then I want to make sure there are consequences to that.

Mr. Obama's statement, a variation of what he's said countless times in the past, is worth examining for what it reveals about him.

1. President Obama is once again engaging in what psychiatrists refer to as projection, in which people lay their worst attributes on others.

In this instance, the most hyper-partisan president in modern times is ascribing that trait to Congressional Republicans. What we've learned about Mr. Obama over the years is that he that while he is unusually inept at governing, he's quite good at campaigning. He certainly enjoys it, having taken the concept of the Permanent Campaign beyond anything we've ever seen. It turns out it's the only thing he does well—no human being in history has raised campaign cash quite like he has—and it's all he seems interested in doing.

On some deep, subconscious level, though, Mr. Obama seems ashamed of the path he's chosen. And so the president projects those traits he loathes in himself on to others. To give you a sense of how deep the malady runs, the president does more than merely project; he actually preaches against the very character flaws he himself cannot overcome.

2. The president can hardly go a day without impugning the motivations of his opponents. They never have honest differences with the president. Instead they are suffering from an illness ("fever"), cowardice (afraid of what Rush Limbaugh might say about them), and lack of patriotism (caring about elections rather than future generations). Mr. Obama is the ultimate *ad hominem* president.

3. The president spoke about cynicism toward government. But if the president is really concerned about this phenomenon, he might look at his own administration, which is dealing with multiplying scandals. I would submit that misleading the country in the aftermath of the deadly siege on the diplomatic outpost in Benghazi, the IRS's targeting of political opponents, and seizing the phone records of journalists might well deepen the public's cynicism toward government. And for the record, [trust in the federal government](#) has reached new lows during the Obama years. Might he have some responsibility for that?

4. Mr. Obama professes deep concern "about the next generation." Those words would be a bit more believable if he were not handing off to the next generation a crushing debt burden that will take generations to undo, if it is ever undone. No president holds a candle to Mr. Obama when it comes to engaging in generational theft.

5. As for gridlock: This is actually inherent in our system of government. It's called "checks and balances" and "separation of powers." The president might want to consult [this](#) document for more.

I understand Mr. Obama has complained many times that there are checks on his power, but I prefer the wisdom of James Madison to the ambitions of Barack Obama. And, oh, by the way: greater gridlock in Mr. Obama's first two years in office would have prevented passage of the Affordable Care Act, which the presidential historian George Edwards has called "perhaps the least popular major domestic policy passed in the last century" and which Democratic Senator Max Baucus has warned is a "huge train wreck coming down." It turns out that gridlock, if not always ideal, beats passing really bad legislation.

Just over a hundred days into his second term, the president finds himself weak, wounded, and on the defensive. Which means Mr. Obama will need to find new enemies to blame, new people to target, and new divisions to exploit.

This is what Hope and Change looks like five years in.

Washington Post [Eric Holder's abdication](#)

by Dana Milbank

As the nation's top law enforcement official, [Eric Holder](#) is privy to all kinds of sensitive information. But he seems to be proud of how little he knows.

Why didn't his Justice Department inform the Associated Press, as the law requires, before [pawing through reporters' phone records](#)?

"I do not know," the [attorney general told the House Judiciary Committee](#) on Wednesday afternoon, "why that was or was not done. I simply don't have a factual basis to answer that question."

Why didn't the DOJ seek the AP's cooperation, as the law also requires, before issuing subpoenas?

"I don't know what happened there," Holder replied. "I was recused from the case."

Why, asked the committee's chairman, [Rep. Bob Goodlatte \(R-Va.\)](#), was the whole matter handled in a manner that appears "contrary to the law and standard procedure"?

"I don't have a factual basis to answer the questions that you have asked, because I was recused," the attorney general said.

On and on Holder went: "I don't know. I don't know. . . . I would not want to reveal what I know. . . . I don't know why that didn't happen. . . . I know nothing, so I'm not in a position really to answer."

Holder seemed to regard this ignorance as a shield protecting him and the Justice Department from all criticism of the Obama administration's assault on press freedoms. But his claim that his "recusal" from the case exempted him from all discussion of the matter didn't fly with Republicans or Democrats on the committee, who justifiably saw his recusal as more of an abdication.

"There doesn't seem to be any acceptance of responsibility in the Justice Department for things that have gone wrong," said [Rep. James Sensenbrenner \(R-Wis.\)](#), after Holder placed the AP matter in the lap of his deputy. "We don't know where the buck stops."

The best Holder could do was offer an "after-action analysis" of the matter and pledge the [administration's renewed support for a media shield law](#) (the same proposed law the Obama administration undermined three years ago). But that does nothing to reverse the damage the administration has already done with its wholesale snooping into reporters' phone records and its unprecedented number of leak prosecutions.

"I realize there are exceptions and that you have recused yourself, but it seems to me clear that the actions of the department have, in fact, impaired the First Amendment," [Rep. Zoe Lofgren](#)

[\(D-Calif.\)](#) told Holder. “Reporters who might have previously believed that a confidential source would speak to them would no longer have that level of confidence, because those confidential sources are now going to be chilled in their relationship with the press.”

In a sense, the two topics that dogged Holder most on Wednesday — the AP phone records and [the IRS’s targeting of conservative groups](#) — were one and the same. In both cases, Americans are being punished and intimidated for exercising their right of free expression — by the taxing authorities, in the conservatives’ case, and by federal prosecutors, in the reporters’ case.

But Holder cared so little about those two issues that he said not a peep about either the IRS or the AP in his [opening statement](#). When he was questioned about the AP case, his first response was to suggest the criticism of him was political. “I mean, there’s been a lot of criticism,” Holder said. “In fact, the head of the RNC called for my resignation, in spite of the fact that I was not the person involved in that decision.”

Republicans on the House committee had voted previously to [hold Holder in contempt of Congress](#), and Holder made clear the feeling was mutual; he informed [Rep. Darrell Issa \(R-Calif.\)](#) that his line of questioning was “too consistent with the way in which you conduct yourself as a member of Congress. It’s unacceptable, and it’s shameful.” Some of the Republicans provided Holder justification for his disdain. [Rep. Louie Gohmert \(R-Tex.\)](#), defying the chairman’s gavel, shouted a stream of exotic accusations at Holder, closing with the complaint that Holder was casting “[aspersions on my asparagus](#).”

But there would be more sympathy, and support, for Holder if he took seriously the lawmakers’ legitimate questions about his department’s abuse of power in the AP case. He may have recused himself from the leak probe that led to the searches of reporters’ phone records (a decision he took so lightly that he didn’t put it in writing), but he isn’t recused from defending the First Amendment.

Didn’t the deputy attorney general who approved the subpoenas have the same potential conflict of interest that Holder claimed?

“I don’t know.”

When did Holder recuse himself?

“I’m not sure.”

How much time was spent exploring alternatives to the subpoenas?

“I don’t know, because, as I said, I recused myself.”

But when the Justice Department undermines the Constitution, recusal is no excuse.

Right Turn

[Holder's recusal and the leak investigation are unprecedented](#)

by Jennifer Rubin



[Attorney General Eric Holder](#) told the House Judiciary Committee he recused himself from the leak investigation involving sweeping surveillance of the Associated Press because he was a “fact witness,” meaning he had access to the classified data at issue and was questioned about it. But he can’t recall when he recused himself. And it wasn’t in writing. In one of the worst security leaks of which he is aware (he says), he never told the White House (he says) that he took himself out of the loop.

Remarkable really, even if true. [John Yoo, who authored the enhanced interrogation memos in the Bush Justice Department](#) and was widely criticized by the left for taking a broad view of executive power, was somewhat incredulous when I asked him about the Justice Department’s behavior. As for the paperless recusal, he told me, “There must be something in writing to at least the DAG [deputy attorney general].”

[Former attorney general Michael Mukasey](#) agreed, emailing me that “it is inconceivable to me that you would not do it formally. Of course, you’d have to inform all the people who might otherwise have to contact you. Indeed, if you didn’t you might conceivably come into possession of information you should not have.” He added that “[in the one case I can recall in which I recused myself](#) I did it in writing. Hard to imagine how else you’d do it — shout ‘I recuse myself in your office? In the hall?’”

But it is the unrestrained nature of investigation that is breathtaking, beyond anything Mukasey has seen, he told me. Yoo observed, “I cannot think of another example this broad that didn’t turn out to be unauthorized. The only comparable thing was cases where a court tried to get a journalist to reveal a source. But I cannot think of the actual monitoring of reporters and editors.” He added, “If something like that had ever come up during the Bush administration in my time at DOJ, I would have said it was unconstitutional.”

Apparently no [senior officials in this administration, including the president](#), know much of anything — and maybe don’t want to know. The AP’s chief, in his letter of complaint to Holder, observed:

There can be no possible justification for such an overbroad collection of the telephone communications of The Associated Press and its reporters. These records potentially reveal communications with confidential sources across all of the news gathering activities undertaken by the AP during a two-month period, provide a road map to AP's news gathering operations, and disclose information about AP's activities and operations that the government has no conceivable right to know.

That the Department undertook this unprecedented step without providing any notice to the AP, and without taking any steps to narrow the scope of its subpoenas to matters actually relevant to an ongoing investigation, is particularly troubling.

The sheer volume of records obtained, most of which can have no plausible connection to any ongoing investigation, indicates, at a minimum, that this effort did not comply with 28 C.F.R. §50.10 and should therefore never have been undertaken in the first place. The regulations require that, in all cases and without exception, a subpoena for a reporter's telephone toll records must be "as narrowly drawn as possible." This plainly did not happen.

So how was this determination made? Why wasn't the AP contacted? Holder doesn't know. The White House claims not to know. No one at the cabinet level or above knows that the most egregious interference with press freedom in recent memory was undertaken?

[Holder](#) took a [bipartisan](#) beating at the hands of House Judiciary committee members. Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.) lectured him: "Reporters who might previously have believed that a confidential source will speak to them will no longer have that level of confidence."

[The Post](#) joined about 50 other news organizations in a letter to Holder and his deputy blasting the snooping. It read in part:

Subpoenas of the news media for testimony and evidence are governed by the Attorney General's guidelines found at 28 C.F.R. § 50.10 and incorporated into the U.S. Attorney's Manual. . . . These guidelines were enacted in 1972 and were expanded specifically to cover telephone records in 1980. They were developed to accommodate both the interests of the government in prosecuting crime and the First Amendment interests in reporting on issues of public concern. We know this to be true because the Reporters Committee played a role in their promulgation. In this instance, where the Department subpoenaed two months of records related to 20 telephone lines, including records from major AP bureaus and the home phone and cell phone records of individual journalists, the Department appears to have ignored or brushed aside almost every aspect of the guidelines

It should immediately return the telephone toll records obtained and destroy all copies, as requested by The Associated Press. If it refuses, it should at the very least segregate these records and prohibit any further use of them at this time. It should explain how government lawyers overreached so egregiously in this matter and describe what the Department will do to mitigate the impact of these actions. Additionally, the Department must also publicly disclose more information on who has had access to the records and what protections were taken to ensure that information unrelated to a specific criminal investigation was not utilized by any Department employees. . . . And finally, the Department should announce whether it has served any other pending news media-related subpoenas that have not yet been disclosed.

The president plainly hates leaks. He has [investigated and prosecuted more leaks than any president](#). So he set the tone: *Get those leakers!* And either Holder or someone below him took that sentiment quite literally and went after reporters' records with abandon. The result was an egregious infringement of the free press.

Is this what the president wanted? If not, why are Holder and his deputy still there? And if this is the sort of governmental overreach Obama approves of, then he owes the Bush administration — whom he railed at for abusing the Constitution — one heck of an apology. Never did the Bush administration, even in the face of countless leaks, go on this sort of binge, the intent of which is to signal to every member of the media and all possible sources to back off.

I'm sure there are [lefty bloggers and pundits who will defend](#) this (Media Matters is just the most buffoonish version of a cult of White House excuse-makers masquerading as independent journalists). But look what they would defend — the abject misuse of government power and the intimidation of those who inform the public of what is going on inside an entirely dysfunctional government.

Politico

[Chris Matthews sours on Obama](#)

by Dylan Byers

President [Obama](#) "obviously likes giving speeches more than he does running the executive branch," Chris Matthews said tonight.

Yes, you read that right: The MSNBC host who in 2008 felt a "[thrill going up my leg](#)" after hearing Obama speak has grown disenchanted. Tonight's episode of Hardball saw Matthews delivering a rare, unforgiving grilling of the president as severe as anything that might appear on Fox News.

"What part of the presidency does Obama like? He doesn't like dealing with other politicians -- that means his own cabinet, that means members of the congress, either party. He doesn't particularly like the press.... He likes to write the speeches, likes to rewrite what Favreau and the others wrote for the first draft," Matthews said.

"So what part does he like? He likes going on the road, campaigning, visiting businesses like he does every couple days somewhere in Ohio or somewhere," Matthews continued. "But what part does he like? He doesn't like lobbying for the bills he cares about. He doesn't like selling to the press. He doesn't like giving orders or giving somebody the power to give orders. He doesn't seem to like being an executive."

On Tuesday's program, Matthews similarly called Obama "[a ship with the engine off](#)."

ABC News

IRS Official in Charge During Tea Party Targeting Now Runs Health Care Office

by John Parkinson

The Internal Revenue Service official in charge of the tax-exempt organizations at the time when the unit targeted tea party groups now runs the IRS office responsible for the health care legislation.

Sarah Hall Ingram served as commissioner of the office responsible for tax-exempt organizations between 2009 and 2012. But Ingram has since left that part of the IRS and is [now the director](#) of the IRS' Affordable Care Act office, the IRS confirmed to ABC News today.



Her successor, Joseph Grant, is taking the fall for misdeeds at the scandal-plagued unit between 2010 and 2012. During at least part of that time, Grant served as deputy commissioner of the tax-exempt unit.

Grant [announced today](#) that he would retire June 3, despite being appointed as commissioner of the tax-exempt office May 8, a week ago.

As the House [voted to fully repeal](#) the Affordable Care Act Thursday evening, House Speaker John Boehner expressed "serious concerns" that the IRS is empowered as the law's chief enforcer.

"Fully repealing ObamaCare will help us build a stronger, healthier economy, and will clear the way for patient-centered reforms that lower health care costs and protect jobs," Boehner, R-Ohio, said.

“Obamacare empowers the agency that just violated the public’s trust by secretly targeting conservative groups,” Rep. Marlin Stutzman, R-Ind., added. “Even by Washington’s standards, that’s unacceptable.”

Sen. John Cornyn even introduced a bill, the “Keep the IRS Off Your Health Care Act of 2013,” which would prohibit the Secretary of the Treasury, or any delegate, including the IRS, from enforcing the Affordable Care Act.

“Now more than ever, we need to prevent the IRS from having any role in Americans’ health care,” Cornyn, R-Texas, stated. “I do not support Obamacare, and after the events of last week, I cannot support giving the IRS any more responsibility or taxpayer dollars to implement a broken law.”

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell also reacted to the revelation late Thursday, stating the news was “stunning, just stunning.”

Examiner

[IRS tax exemption/Obamacare exec got \\$103,390 in bonuses](#)

by Mark Tapscott

Sarah Hall Ingram, the IRS executive in charge of the tax exempt division in 2010 when it began targeting conservative Tea Party, evangelical and pro-Israel groups for harrassment, got more than \$100,000 in bonuses between 2009 and 2012.

More recently, Ingram was promoted to serve as director of the tax agency's Obamacare program office, a position that put her in charge of the vast expansion of the IRS' regulatory power and staffing in connection with federal health care, ABC reported [earlier today](#).

Ingram received a \$7,000 bonus in 2009, according to data obtained by *The Washington Examiner* from the IRS, then a \$34,440 bonus in 2010, \$35,400 in 2011 and \$26,550 last year, for a total of \$103,390. Her annual salary went from \$172,500 to \$177,000 during the same period.

The 2010, 2011 and 2012 bonuses were awarded during the period when IRS harrassment of the conservative groups was most intense. The newspaper obtained the data via a Freedom of Information Act request.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., described the Ingram awards as "stunning, just stunning."

Ingram has some history as a government lawyer receiving controversial bonuses. According to [The Washington Post](#), she received a \$47,900 bonus for distinguished service in 2004 from President George W. Bush.

[Earlier Thursday](#), *The Washington Examiner* reported that the IRS paid out more than \$92 million in bonuses during the four-year period of Ingram's awards to her and nearly 17,000 other agency employees. Those bonuses averaged more than \$5,500 per employee.

[Go here](#) for a spreadsheet of the salary and bonus data for IRS employees getting bonuses between 2009 and 2012.



[OBAMA CALLS IN MARINES -- TO SHIELD HIM FROM RAIN...](#)

Obama summons Marine to Shield him from the rain



Marines may only use an umbrella while escorting a lady.

SEEMS APPROPRIATE.

www.facebook.com/ArmedMommy





**Did you REALLY make that
Marine hold your umbrella?**



AT NO TIME WAS THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AWARE

OF WHAT THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION WAS DOING

BELIEVE ME, *I have NO KNOWLEDGE whatsoever* about FAST AND FURIOUS...



TRUST ME, *I don't have the SLIGHTEST IDEA WHO leaked sensitive NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SECRETS...*



I PROMISE YOU, *I have NO CLUE WHO was behind the SECURITY LAPSE and the COVER-UP in BENGHAZI...*



LET ME ASSURE YOU, *I didn't have the FOGGIEST NOTION of WHAT was GOING ON at the IRS.*



BELIEVE ME, *I don't KNOW ANYTHING about the AP PHONE TAPS by my JUSTICE DEPARTMENT.*



You can be CONFIDANT that I am IN CHARGE.



I LEARNED ABOUT IT IN THE NEWS.



WE HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE BEYOND THE PRESS REPORTS.



I KNOW NOTHING, SO I'M NOT IN A POSITION REALLY TO ANSWER.



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COMING SOON... OBAMA SEX TAPE

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MY JOB IS TO TARGET HIGH
VALUE TERRORISTS WHO
CHALLENGE THE SOVEREIGNTY
OF THE UNITED STATES...
WHAT ABOUT YOU?

SAME, ONLY WE
CALL THEM
CONSERVATIVES.



