

June 5, 2013

Jonathan Tobin notices some hypocrisy.

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By continuing to support the Turkish ruling party, as it now becomes the subject of anger from its citizens, the administration is showing its true colors. If Obama is not prepared to criticize his friend who heads up the government in Ankara the way he has done other regimes that came under fire, then it shows that the talk about democracy was just so much hot air and that when push comes to shove, the president would rather befriend an Islamist ruler than embrace the pleas of the Turkish people for change. ...

Jennifer Rubin posts on the new job for Susan Rice - national security adviser.

Pickerhead thinks this is a good thing. She can be on the lookout for any more videos that might inflame the arab street.

Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, who leapt from dishonest talking points to out and out falsehoods (it was a spontaneous attack sparked by an anti-Muslim narrative!) on the Benghazi attack, gets her reward today — a promotion to national security adviser. She'll not need Senate confirmation, but her appointment should not halt efforts to subpoena her for her conduct as ambassador to the U.N. It is noteworthy that President Obama did not have the nerve to nominate her for secretary of state, where she would have faced an onslaught of questions about her infamous Sunday talk show performance

The move is an in-your-face insult to Congress, to the Americans killed in Benghazi and their families and another instance of utterly incompetent, dishonest loyalists getting the really big jobs (e.g. Chuck Hagel). Rice was, of course, front and center in the do-nothing approach to the Rwandan genocide during the Clinton administration. She delivered a blistering diatribe against Israel after being obliged to veto a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Israel for housing construction. In other words, she is the perfect choice for a president who has misread almost every foreign policy dilemma, has had a prickly relationship with Israel and doesn't give a fig about genocide in Syria. ...

Megan McArdle takes on the subject of all the IRS head's visits to the white house.

Last week, conservatives were saying that former IRS head Douglas Shulman had been to the White House 118 times, while his predecessor had visited the Bush era White House only once. I didn't write about it because I idly assumed that this reflected some underlying change in administration management style or legislative priorities; perhaps, for example, he'd been there talking about Obamacare implementation and changes in tax enforcement.

But the Daily Caller has now compiled a list of White House visits by various administration officials, and Shulman sure does seem to visit a lot more than other folks.

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John Hayward comments in Human Events.

In the early days of the IRS scandal, Douglas Shulman – who was IRS Commissioner during the period when the abuses of power against conservative and Tea Party groups began – was asked why he spent so much time at the White House. With the arrogant condescension we've all grown to know and love from his corrupt agency, Shulman claimed it had a lot to do with the White House Easter Egg roll.

In a more serious vein, Shulman also mentioned consulting with the White House about tax policy changes, the IRS budget, and other sundry matters... none of which goes very far toward explaining why he felt the need to visit the White House over a hundred times.

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And there might be even more Shulman visits to the White House yet to be revealed, because not all of the records covering his tenure as IRS commissioner have been released yet.

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We've had many occasions to play the "what if a Republican did it?" game throughout the Obama years, but this time it's really mind-blowing to reverse the political polarity of the scandal and imagine the reaction. Suppose the IRS was caught giving rough treatment to liberal groups – let's say liberal minority groups – right before an election where the defeated Democrat challenger's base didn't show up in the expected numbers. Suppose we had powerful congressional Republicans on the record urging the IRS to go after these groups. Imagine the IRS commissioner was found to be making incredibly frequent visits to the White House throughout the scandal.

J. Christian Adams spotted another frequent visitor.

The big news today is that IRS head Doug Schulman visited the White House a stunning 157 times during the time a policy targeting the Tea Party was developed. But Schulman isn't the only non-cabinet member from administration to visit the White House an extraordinary number of times. So did truth-challenged and Senate-stalled Labor Department nominee Tom Perez.

The Daily Caller study of the White House visitor logs demonstrates that Perez was the third overall most frequent visitor to the White House, just behind Deputy Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank. Perez visited the White House 83 times during a period in which he overrode the recommendations of career Justice Department lawyers to preclear South Carolina voter ID under the Voting Rights Act and blocked Texas Voter ID.

During the same period, Perez allowed the nation's voter rolls to become bloated with millions of dead voters by refusing to bring any cases under Section 8 of the Motor Voter law. This federal law requires states to maintain clean voter rolls before federal elections. Instead, millions of dead and ineligible voters were allowed by Perez to remain on the rolls for the November 2012 election because his radical ideology prevented him from enforcing the law.

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Walter Russell Mead on the further collapse of Detroit.

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Museum administrators are outraged, but the choice may be keeping the art or paying for vital public services. According to Orr, the city has "long-term obligations of at least \$15 billion, unsustainable cash flow shortages and miserably low credit ratings that make it difficult to borrow." But as the WSJ reports, the city may not have a choice: ...

P. J. O'Rourke had an item in the Weekly Standard about the decline of NASA. It was titled "Obama's Asteroid" and it is 2,300 words. Too long for us today, but you needed to see this about the value of space exploration. Follow the link if you wish to read it all.

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Contentions

Turkish Protests Expose Obama's Hypocrisy

by Jonathan S. Tobin

One of the keynotes of President Obama's foreign policy throughout his first term has been an attempt to pay lip service to the Arab Spring protests against authoritarian regimes throughout the Muslim world. Those sentiments were not matched with strategies that were designed to enhance the efforts of those who were advocating more freedom or even to ward off the unintended consequences of the unrest, such as the rise of Islamist parties like Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Yet in spite of those failures the president has never stopped trying to pose as a friend of Arab liberty even if he did nothing to help that cause. But the recent [demonstrations in Turkey](#) have exposed Obama's policies in a way that perhaps no other development has done.

By continuing to support the Turkish ruling party, as it now becomes the subject of anger from its citizens, the administration is showing its true colors. If Obama is not prepared to criticize his friend who heads up the government in Ankara the way he has done other regimes that came under fire, then it shows that the talk about democracy was just so much hot air and that when

push comes to shove, the president would rather befriend an Islamist ruler than embrace the pleas of the Turkish people for change.

Let's specify that America's attitude toward Turkey is complicated. First of all, it is a NATO ally and a nominal democracy. The United States also needs Turkey to be a responsible actor in a region where even more hostile powers, such as Iran and Russia, are creating havoc. It is also true that Turkey is key to efforts to oust the Bashar Assad regime in Syria and in any hope of preventing Iran and its Hezbollah allies from consolidating its axis of power there.

But some of the same things—at least insofar as regional stability is concerned—could have been said about the Hosni Mubarak regime in Egypt. But in that case the president lost no time in throwing a longtime American ally under the bus. I am not one of those who blame the president for Mubarak's fall. The longtime dictator could not have been saved even with energetic American support and there was a good argument to be made that what the U.S. needed to do was to get out in front of the problem and support Egyptian moderates and to encourage the army to do a deal with them to bring about a peaceful transition to a new government. But instead of doing that, the U.S. encouraged the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and used its economic leverage to prevent the army from stopping the Islamists from taking power.

But in Turkey, the Islamists are already in power and have spent, as our [Michael Rubin](#) has documented many times, the last several years transforming an imperfect democracy into an authoritarian state. Yet it is the person who has been the architect of that depressing move away from freedom, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who seems to be President Obama's favorite foreign leader. Erdoğan was recently in the U.S. for meetings in Washington and got his customary warm welcome from his pal in the Oval Office. The U.S. has worked hard to get the Turks to back away from open conflict with Israel. But even though an Israeli apology solved the flotilla controversy, the Turks continue to be ardent supporters of Hamas and therefore part of the problem rather than the solution.

Yet with the Turkish people beginning to push back against the seemingly inexorable drive of Erdoğan's AKP to Islamicize what was once a thoroughly secular country, surely what is required from the president of the United States is more than a hug for his friend in Ankara. An American government that did not hesitate to embrace the Tunisian and Egyptian protests yet which stayed silent when demonstrators took to the streets in Istanbul—just as it did when Tehran was the scene of massive protests against another Islamist regime in 2009—has opened itself up to charges of hypocrisy as well as incompetence.

Americans cannot be guardians of the freedom of all other nations, but surely the U.S. government must be a friend to the cause of liberty if it is to keep faith with the values that have sustained our nation. No one should have any illusions as to the AKP relinquishing power simply because the Turkish people have taken to the streets. But if this episode passes without an expression of American support for those seeking reform in Turkey, then it will confirm that the Obama administration's version of realpolitik has more to do with the president's level of comfort with Islamist regimes than it does with American strategic interests.

Right Turn

Susan Rice gets her reward with huge promotion

by Jennifer Rubin

Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, who leapt from dishonest talking points to out and out falsehoods (it was a spontaneous attack sparked by an anti-Muslim narrative!) on the Benghazi attack, gets her reward today — [a promotion to national security adviser](#). She'll not need Senate confirmation, but her appointment should not halt efforts to subpoena her for her conduct as ambassador to the U.N. It is noteworthy that President Obama did not have the nerve to nominate her for secretary of state, where she would have faced an onslaught of questions about her infamous Sunday talk show performance



Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton.

The move is an in-your-face insult to Congress, to the Americans killed in Benghazi and their families and another instance of utterly incompetent, dishonest loyalists getting the really big jobs (e.g. Chuck Hagel). Rice was, of course, front and center in the do-nothing approach to the Rwandan genocide during the Clinton administration. She delivered a blistering diatribe against Israel after being obliged to veto a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Israel for housing construction. In other words, she is the perfect choice for a president who has misread almost every foreign policy dilemma, has had a prickly relationship with Israel and doesn't give a fig about genocide in Syria.

To backfill Rice's post, the president is appointing Samantha Power, best known for calling Hillary Clinton a "monster" during the 2008 campaign. It is that kind of forthrightness that could come in handy at the U.N. Ironically it was Power who [deplored Rice's behavior](#) on Rwanda. That would be two pluses in her column. It is true that in the past Power has counseled a brand of foreign policy too conciliatory for my taste (but then the president is the chief proponent of that world view), but previously in the administration she at least nudged the president to intervene in Libya. There is no reason to hold up her nomination, although she should be questioned as to our post-Gaddafi strategy and how and why so little action was taken to bolster the regime and tamp down on jihadists (who eventually killed four Americans). Her views on genocide and the need to incorporate human rights into our foreign policy should prove to be interesting. It also is important to get her take on whether our continued participation in the heinous, dictatorship-stocked U.N. Human Rights Council has accomplished anything other than to legitimize the most anti-Semitic arm of the U.N. (and that is saying a lot).

The temptation is great for Republicans to lash out at people unconnected to or blameless in the Benghazi fiasco because they can't get to the people really responsible (e.g. the president, the current and future national security advisers, Hillary Clinton). But we should have little patience with such behavior. When they had a chance to hold up the nominations of John Brennan and Chuck Hagel, they folded. When Clinton was testifying, they did not ask her key questions (e.g. had she sent Christopher Stevens to Benghazi, why raise the anti-Muslim video at the casket ceremony on Sept. 14, did she take her eye off the ball in Benghazi). By the way, where is the subpoena to demand Clinton's and David Petraeus's testimony?

Daily Beast

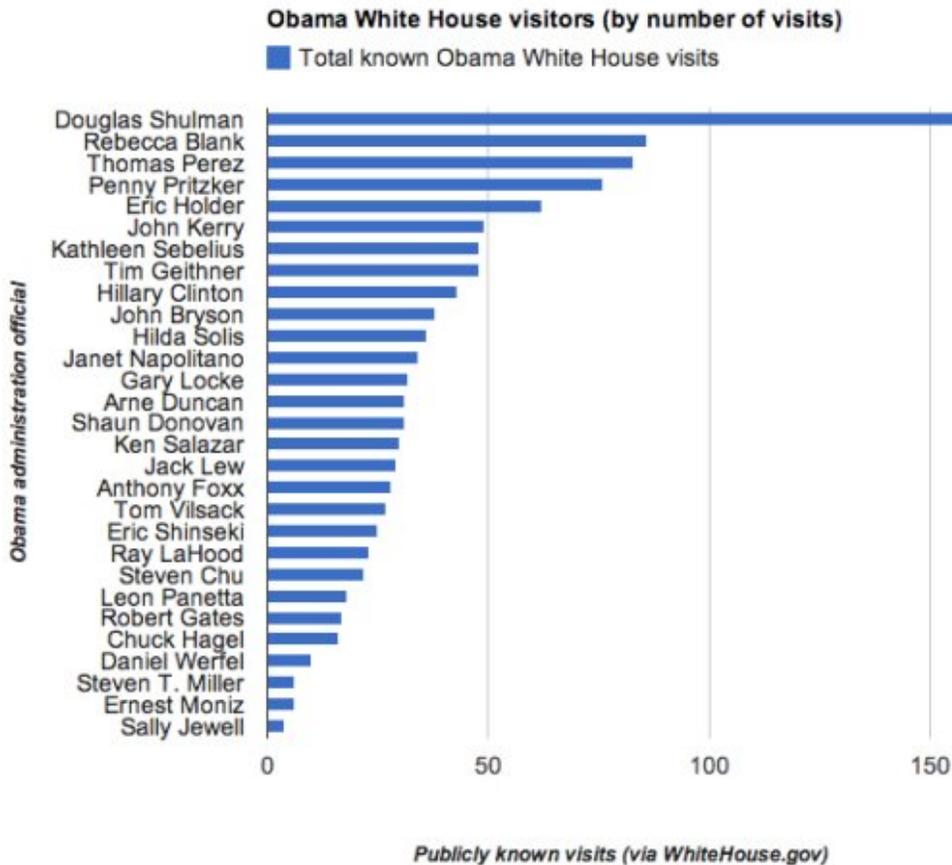
Boy, the Head of the IRS Went to the White House A Lot

The Daily Caller reports that Shulman visited more often than the Health and Human Services Secretary

by Megan McArdle

Last week, conservatives were saying that former IRS head Douglas Shulman had been to the White House 118 times, while his predecessor had visited the Bush era White House only once. I didn't write about it because I idly assumed that this reflected some underlying change in administration management style or legislative priorities; perhaps, for example, he'd been there talking about Obamacare implementation and changes in tax enforcement.

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I think the administration needs to explain this. Not because I think that Obama called Doug Shulman into his office to tell him to persecute the Tea Party. That explanation is unlikely for all sorts of reasons:

1. Delaying perhaps 100 applications for 501(c)(4) status did not meaningfully impact the election. I'm not minimizing what happened to those groups; it's absolutely outrageous that the IRS told its workers to be on the lookout for the words Tea Party and Patriot in the names. But I can't believe that it was a deliberate political strategy, because there's no way such a strategy would have worked. It's moronic: all cost and no benefit. And whatever you think about Obama's political strategists, they are definitely not morons.
2. If they were having secret, clandestine meetings to order grossly illegal behavior, it would probably be foolish to have them in the White House, where the visits would be recorded. Much easier for the staffer to meet in the IRS, or a nearby Starbucks.
3. Why on earth would it have taken 118 meetings? Did Doug Shulman not understand "target the tea party" the first 117 times Obama said it?

Nonetheless, I think the White House should explain this. Maybe the Daily Caller has missed people who came to the White House more often, or otherwise made a mistake with the data. Or maybe they haven't. But presumably the administration knows why Shulman was there-- there will be day planning entries, memos, meeting notes, and so forth. Since I presume that these meetings were innocent, they should release them.

Though I don't think that the administration was involved in some sinister conspiracy, I do think that conservatives have legitimate reason not to trust that the laws of the land are being impartially applied to them. This sort of thing doesn't help. The administration needs to move to restore confidence by being as open and transparent as possible.

Human Events

[IRS commish had a close relationship with White House](#)

by John Hayward

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Pajamas Media

Tom Perez: Obama's Man at the White House

by J. Christian Adams

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American Interest

[Detroit Heads to the Pawn Shop](#)

by Walter Russell Mead



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Last week, Emergency Manager (and bankruptcy lawyer) Kevyn Orr decided to list the holdings of the Detroit Institute of Arts among the city's assets in preparation for a possible bankruptcy. If the city goes through with it, it could be forced to sell off any of its assets—which now include the museum's collection.

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“Kevyn Orr doesn't want the collection sold,” Mr. Nowling said. “But in bankruptcy, it could be eyed by creditors.” [...]

But legal experts say that in a municipal bankruptcy, it is possible for a city to sell assets, even cultural icons. James Spiotto, a bankruptcy attorney and author on municipal-finance issues based in Chicago, said that “in order to provide essential government services like public safety, roads and education, certain other programs are going to be curtailed or eliminated. So it's not surprising that the sale of art is on the table.”

The collection, which include treasures by Bruegel, Rodin and van Gogh as well as Diego Rivera's famous “Detroit Industry” murals, is ostensibly worth [billions of dollars](#), but those measures can't really capture what such artistic treasures mean to a community.

Unfortunately the city is already struggling to [keep the lights on](#). Local businesses recently had to step in to [buy the city police cars and ambulances](#). Meanwhile, Detroit has closed [nearly a quarter](#) of the city's firehouses, and the department's equipment is beginning to fall apart. At this point, the city may need the money more than it needs the art.

This is another grim reminder of just how destructive Detroit's [corrupt machine politics](#) have been. At one time, Detroit was the manufacturing capital of America and one of the country's great cities; today it's trying to stave off a kind of modern-day bonfire of the vanities.

Every time Detroit seems like it's about to hit rock bottom, a trap door opens to reveal yet another howling abyss.

Weekly Standard

[Obama's Asteroid](#)

The decline of NASA and the senseless priorities of our government

by P. J. O'Rourke

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LAME ~~DICK~~
Ostrich



“Well, it turns out our Founders designed a system that makes it more difficult to bring about change that I would like sometimes.”
– Barack Obama

THE CONSTITUTION

Frustrating Liberals and
Left-Wing Extremists

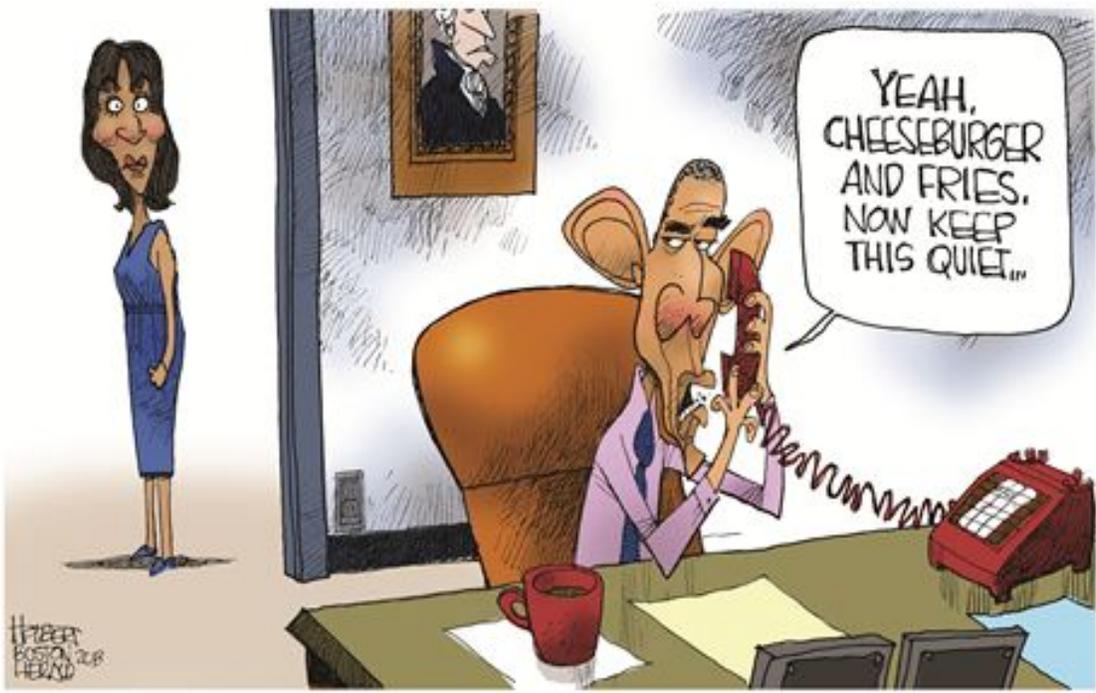
Since 1788



"TORNADO? NO, OBAMA ADMINISTRATION."



"YOU'VE BEEN MONITORING MY PHONE CALLS?"



ANOTHER SCANDAL BREWING