

October 13, 2014

Hitherto the country's worst president and one of the most contemptible politicians, now Jimmy Carter has decided to pile on the hapless clueless president. Power Line has the story. Will somebody please put Jimmah in a home where he can't be interviewed? *When Jimmy Carter starts criticizing your foreign policy as weak and indecisive, you are getting to the bottom of the barrel. Jimmy unloaded on Barack Obama yesterday:*

Former President Jimmy Carter is criticizing President Barack Obama's Middle East policy, saying he has shifting policies and waited too long to take action against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

In an interview published Tuesday in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, the 39th president said the Obama administration, by not acting sooner, allowed ISIL to build up its strength.

Carter said Obama's air campaign against ISIL in Iraq has "a possibility of success," provided that some troops are available on the ground. He did not specify whether he meant U.S. or other ground forces.

The former Democratic president and Georgia governor also said the president has shifted his Middle East policy on several occasions.

When you've lost Jimmy "Boots on the Ground" Carter, whom haven't you lost? That's got to be a short list.

Peter Wehner has presidential sized worries.

... What is worth paying increasing attention to, I think, is the emotional state of the president. It's in front of his donors that his most authentic feelings seem to surface, and it's clear he's becoming increasingly isolated, embittered, and thin skinned. His excuse making is now chronic and habitual. He's even displaying some signs of paranoia. Everyone is against him.

Obama is becoming Nixonian.

The man who by a wide margin has received the most worshipful press coverage in at least the last half-century is complaining that the press is mistreating him. A president who routinely misleads the public on matters large and small, who first ran for president on the promise of unifying America but governs based on dividing it, and who allows the most important national-security matters to be decided by crass political considerations is blaming others for feeding cynicism. ...

Ron Fournier writes on Panetta and his book.

It's uncanny how the former CIA/Pentagon chief's memoir and book-tour interviews channel the frustrations of Democrats who want the president to succeed but consider him a near-failure, who raised their concerns directly with the president or with his team, and were told to stop their worrying.

Actually, the White House calls it "bed-wetting." Team Obama is dismissive of anybody who dares to say the emperor may need some clothes. Mocked and/or ignored by the White House, these Democrats send messages through journalists.

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... In a column called, "Will the president listen to Leon Panetta?" Balz also urged the president and his team to "take to heart the critique from someone who has served both this president and the country loyally for many years." I can't imagine they will. Nor do most Democrats in this town have much hope for an outbreak of humility at the White House.

It starts with the president—this inability to accept criticism and learn from it—and so Obama seems destined to leave office no more comfortable or competent with the vague arts of leadership than he was six years ago.

Peggy Noonan gives the whip to Panetta.

... this book is smugly, grubbily partisan. Republicans aren't bright and never good, though some—Bob Dole comes up—are reasonable. Republicans presidents tend to be weak or care only for the rich. He really, really hates Newt Gingrich. His headline on the entire Reagan era: "Poverty spread and deepened during the Reagan years." Under Bill Clinton "the economy boomed," "poverty shrunk," and "leadership matters." Reagan, in fairness, was less terrible than Mr. Panetta expected, "less ideological and partisan." Mr. Clinton is "ravenously intelligent." Mr. Panetta lauds Mr. Clinton's "astonishing ability to sift through facts" and his "empathy for average people." The compliments are at once lackeyish and patronizing.

In the epilogue Mr. Panetta seems to catch himself and writes, dictates or edits in the thought that he does not mean "to suggest that Democrats are good and Republicans are bad." But that is what he repeatedly suggests.

Here's what is disturbing: to think this is one of Washington's wise men.

Here's what's true. At 76, at the end of a half-century-long, richly rewarded career, with perspective having presumably been gained and smallness washed away, in a book of history and reflection written at a time of high national peril, a lack of political graciousness, and the continued presence of a dumb and grinding partisanship, is unattractive to the point of unseemly. ...

... Some say he wrote the book to help detach Hillary Clinton's fortunes from those of Mr. Obama. Maybe, but Mr. Panetta is savvy, shrewd and quick to see where things are going. I suspect he's trying to detach his entire party's fortunes from Mr. Obama. Reading this book and considering its timing, you get the impression that's the real worthy battle on his mind.

Ed Morrissey says the president's problems are all of his own creation.

... When the improvements don't materialize, Presidents tend to start looking for new talent. Bush's surge strategy was preceded by the resignation of the unpopular Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and crafted by his replacement Robert Gates. Cabinet members and White House staffers are almost always expendable when the boss needs a boost, a way to signal a change of direction that implies a shift in blame to those departing.

Barack Obama is in trouble now, but in part because the opposite has happened. Gates and his successor Leon Panetta, both widely respected across the political spectrum, have published memoirs of their years in the Obama administration, and they have spared no feelings with their former commander in chief.

Combined with a somewhat milder rebuke from Hillary Clinton's memoirs, we have the unusual specter of having three members of the president's national-security team blaming Obama for not listening to their advice on national security while the President is still in office. ..

John Steele Gordon spots hypocrisy.

"If Republicans win, we know who they'll be fighting for," President Obama said on Tuesday. "Once again, the interests of billionaires will come before the needs of the middle class."

Where did he say it? According to the New York Post, in the hyper-exclusive Conyers Farm area of very upscale Greenwich, Connecticut. Conyers Farm has ten-acre zoning. He was speaking at a fundraiser at the \$26-million estate of a man named, believe it or not, Rich Richman. His audience consisted of people who had paid up to \$32,400 a head to have dinner with him. He had flown up from New York City, where he had earlier attended a fundraiser hosted by George Soros (net worth \$24 billion) and Paul Tudor Jones (net worth \$4.3 billion). The flight was in a convoy of four helicopters and they landed at the Greenwich Polo Club. Polo, of course, is the most expensive sport you can play on land. (A polo field measures 300 by 160 yards, bigger than nine football fields.)

So the president was telling a bunch of millionaires and billionaires to pony up in order to prevent the country from being run for the benefit of millionaires and billionaires, the one segment of the American socioeconomic spectrum that has prospered exceedingly during the Obama administration.

And politicians wonder why people don't like them or trust them.

Jonah Goldberg on the Columbian hooker kerfuffle and why the white house lied.

In news that must have left my friends at the New York Post — never mind the gang at The Daily Show — with a renewed confidence that ours is a just and beneficent God, the White House has been caught covering up a scandal involving a Cartagena hooker.

The phrase "Cartagena hooker" alone is a mellifluous gift to ink-stained wretches everywhere, but the revelation that the White House reassigned the alleged client of the aforementioned Andean call girl to the State Department's office of "Global Women's Issues" is the sort of flourish Tom Wolfe or Chris Buckley wouldn't dare attempt as satire. ...

... The underlying scandal is fairly minor. But if the White House would falsify records and lie to the public about this, is it really so hard to imagine that it would deceive the public – and Congress – about larger issues like, say, Benghazi? (Just this week, former Obama secretary of defense Leon Panetta told Fox News's Bill O'Reilly that the infamous White House talking points on the attack were essentially bogus.)

But it also speaks to the seedy way Obama talks about politics generally. The president loves to denounce a cynical system where politics comes before the public good. He rails about a system where fat cats live by a different set of rules than the little guy, and money buys special treatment and access. But the way he operates runs completely counter to all that. Which is why the only person to come out of this scandal in an honorable light is the Cartagena hooker.

Ron Fournier too.

I don't have a strong opinion on Colombian hookers. The after-hours wongs of a 25-year-old White House volunteer make no difference to me. There are bigger stories better suited for the word "scandal" than the 2012 drinking-and-carousing embarrassment that cost 10 Secret Service agents their jobs.

But I don't like government cover-ups, favoritism, and nepotism—all of which are exposed in the latest Washington Post investigation of the U.S. Secret Service. The story by Carol D. Leonnig and David Nakamura ("[White House Knew of Possible Tie to Cartagena](#)") also hints at a rift between the president's political and security teams that makes me worry about the safety of Barack Obama and future presidents.

"As nearly two dozen Secret Service agents and members of the military were punished or fired following a 2012 prostitution scandal in Colombia, Obama administration officials repeatedly denied that anyone from the White House was involved.

But new details drawn from government documents and interviews show that senior White House aides were given information at the time suggesting that a prostitute was an overnight guest in the hotel room of a presidential advance-team member—yet that information was never thoroughly investigated or publicly acknowledged." ...

The cartoonists are good today.

Power Line

[Et Tu, Jimmy?](#)

by John Hinderaker

When Jimmy Carter starts criticizing your foreign policy as weak and indecisive, you are getting to the bottom of the barrel. Jimmy unloaded on Barack Obama [yesterday](#):

Former President Jimmy Carter is criticizing President Barack Obama's Middle East policy, saying he has shifting policies and waited too long to take action against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

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Contentions

[The President's Emotional State Bears Watching](#)

by Peter Wehner

One of the more interesting political/psychological pastimes these days is to watch how President Obama deals with his crumbling presidency. The answer is: Not well.

Take (via [The Daily Caller](#)) his comments last night in which Mr. Obama blamed the press for his travails:

"Frankly, the press and Washington, all it does is feed cynicism," he insisted, despite getting six years of favorable coverage from establishment newspapers and TV shows.

"Most of you don't know the statistics I just gave you," Obama said, after listing a series of cherry-picked data that ignored that roughly 10 million Americans who have given up looking for work, and the \$7 trillion in added debt.

"The reason you don't know [the favorable data] is because they elicit hope. They're good news ... and that's not what we hear about," he declared to the roughly 250 supporters who paid up to \$1,000 to attend.

"We hear about phony scandals, and we hear about the latest shiny object, and we hear about how Washington will never work," Obama insisted.

Pobrecito, as the Spanish say. Poor thing.

What is worth paying increasing attention to, I think, is the emotional state of the president. It's in front of his donors that his most authentic feelings seem to surface, and it's clear he's becoming increasingly isolated, embittered, and thin skinned. His excuse making is now chronic and habitual. He's even displaying some signs of paranoia. Everyone is against him.

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The man who by a wide margin has received the most worshipful press coverage in at least the last half-century is complaining that the press is mistreating him. A president who routinely misleads the public on matters large and small, who first ran for president on the promise of unifying America but governs based on dividing it, and who allows the most important national-security matters to be decided by crass political considerations is blaming others for feeding cynicism.

Watching a narcissist struggle to deal with massive, multiplying failures can be a poignant thing, especially when everyone gets what's going on except the narcissist and his enablers. When this happens to a sitting president, however, what is poignant becomes alarming. Because it's always better that the president of the United States live in reality rather than creating his own.

National Journal

[Why Obama Won't Listen to Leon Panetta](#)

The latest tell-all book channels weak-leadership concerns inside Obama's own party

by Ron Fournier

A senator. A House member. A former presidential campaign manager. An adviser to President Obama. All Democrats, these officials have made it a habit to call or email me almost every week of Obama's second term to share their concerns about the course of his presidency.

They ask only that I don't identify them. Some fear retribution; others don't want to compromise their financial or political standing inside their party. These Democrats speak admirably about the president's intellect, integrity, and intentions, but they question his leadership—an admittedly squishy term that can be unfairly deployed against people with the guts to lead. But their critiques are specific, consistent and credible—and they comport with what many other Democrats are telling other journalists, almost always, privately.

Leon Panetta speaks for them now. It's uncanny how the former CIA/Pentagon chief's memoir and book-tour interviews channel the frustrations of Democrats who want the president to succeed but consider him a near-failure, who raised their concerns directly with the president or with his team, and were told to stop their worrying.

Actually, the White House calls it "bed-wetting." Team Obama is dismissive of anybody who dares to say the emperor may need some clothes. Mocked and/or ignored by the White House, these Democrats send messages through journalists.

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Obama is disengaged. While describing how little Obama fought to stop deep automatic budget cuts that rattled the Pentagon, Panetta wrote: "Indeed, that episode highlighted what I regard as his most conspicuous weakness, a frustrating reticence to engage his opponents and rally support for his cause."

"That is not a failing of ideas or of intellect," Panetta added. "He does, however, sometimes lack fire. Too often, in my view, the president relies on the logic of a law professor rather than the passion of a leader."

Obama "gets so discouraged by the process" that he almost abandons the fight, Panetta told [USA Today](#). "He's going to have to jump in the ring and fight it out for the next two years," he said.

Fighting ISIS is an opportunity for a president who has "lost his way" to "repair the damage." Obama vacillates, particularly when it comes to exerted American influence. "He was concerned about the frustration and exhaustion of the country having fought two wars," Panetta [told The New York Times](#). The president, Panetta said, nursed "the hope that perhaps others in the world could step up to the plate and take on these issues." As a result, he added, "there was a kind of a mixed message that went out with regard to the role of the United States."

On Syria, Obama famously drew a "red line" and then failed to act when it was crossed in 2013. "President Obama vacillated," Panetta [wrote](#), "first indicating that he was prepared to order some strikes, then retreating and agreeing to submit the matter to Congress."

Obama shifts blame. While Obama points the finger at former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki for the vacuum created by the withdrawal of U.S. troops, Panetta [confirms](#) that the president never had his heart in efforts to negotiate a deal to maintain a U.S. presence. That "created a vacuum in terms of the ability of that country to better protect itself, and it's out of that vacuum that ISIS began to breed."

Obama is too insular. One of the more accomplished public servants of his generation, Panetta bristled at White House attempts to centralize decision-making and control his contacts with lawmakers and journalists. "In fact, several times when I reached out to Congress or the press without prior White House approval," [he wrote](#), "I was chastised for it."

I agree with *Washington Post* columnist Dan Balz who considers the book a public service, rather than an act of disloyalty.

Panetta comes to this memoir with a perspective that is almost unmatched in public life. He was born in California, the son of Italian immigrants, and began his public service as an aide to Republican Sen. Thomas Kuchel of California during Lyndon Johnson's administration. He later worked as an assistant to Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Robert Finch in the Nixon administration.

He became a Democrat in the early 1970s and was elected to the House from California in 1976. He rose through the ranks to become chairman of the House Budget Committee. He then served as director of the Office of Management and Budget during the first two years of Bill Clinton's presidency and was elevated to chief of staff in 1994 to bring order to the chaotic Clinton White House. He left government at the beginning of Clinton's second term.

Obama recruited him to run the Central Intelligence Agency at the start of his presidency. It was in that role that Panetta recommended and oversaw the mission that killed Osama bin Laden, which Obama approved over the initial objection of then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates. When Gates left the Pentagon, Obama moved Panetta into that position.

Anyone who knows Panetta cannot be surprised that he has written a candid and incisive memoir. He has called things the way he's seen them in Washington for decades, combining wit, laughter and a zeal for political rough-and-tumble with the tough-mindedness of someone who came to get things done.

In a column called, "Will the president listen to Leon Panetta?" Balz also urged the president and his team to "take to heart the critique from someone who has served both this president and the country loyally for many years." I can't imagine they will. Nor do most Democrats in this town have much hope for an outbreak of humility at the White House.

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WSJ Blogs

[Is 'Worthy Fights' Worthy?](#)

Unlike his Pentagon predecessor, Leon Panetta hasn't written a serious memoir.

by Peggy Noonan

[Leon Panetta](#)'s "Worthy Fights" pretends to offer answers to a problem of which the book is actually an example—the mindless (as opposed to thoughtful and constructive) partisanship that has seized Washington. This memoir of his years as a successful political and bureaucratic player is obnoxious and lacks stature. Reading a comparable book, Robert Gates's recent, stinging memoir, you could see through the lines a broken heart. In Mr. Panetta's you see mostly spleen.

He is catty about David Petraeus—his office is "a shrine . . . to himself." Mr. Panetta subtly, deftly, with a winning oh-goshness, takes a whole lot of credit for the bin Laden raid. This section is accompanied by unctuous compliments for Mr. Obama, whose chief brilliance appears to be that he listened to Mr. Panetta.

"Worthy Fights" is highly self-regarding even for a Washington book. Mr. Panetta is always surprised, due to his natural modesty, to be offered yet another, higher position. He reluctantly accepts and wins over doubters with his plain, no-BS style. He does well, seeing around corners, saving budgets, and developing relationships with anxious prime ministers who need a pal.

Publicly Mr. Panetta has always been at great pains to show the smiling, affable face of one who is above partisanship. But this book is smugly, grubbily partisan. Republicans aren't bright and never good, though some—[Bob Dole](#) comes up—are reasonable. Republican presidents tend to be weak or care only for the rich. He really, really hates [Newt Gingrich](#). His headline on the entire Reagan era: "Poverty spread and deepened during the Reagan years." Under Bill Clinton "the economy boomed," "poverty shrunk," and "leadership matters." Reagan, in fairness, was less terrible than Mr. Panetta expected, "less ideological and partisan." Mr. Clinton is "ravenously intelligent." Mr. Panetta lauds Mr. Clinton's "astonishing ability to sift through facts" and his "empathy for average people." The compliments are at once lackeyish and patronizing.

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Here's what's true. At 76, at the end of a half-century-long, richly rewarded career, with perspective having presumably been gained and smallness washed away, in a book of history and reflection written at a time of high national peril, a lack of political graciousness, and the continued presence of a dumb and grinding partisanship, is unattractive to the point of unseemly.

Mr. Panetta perhaps took this tack to buy himself space on the left. He is telling partisan Democrats on the ground that he's really one of them, he hates those Republicans too, so you can trust him when he tells you Mr. Obama's presidency is not a success.

Which he does.

There is "a problem with President Obama's use of his cabinet." Every decision now comes from the White House, from people around the president, so secretaries learn not to take the initiative or push for needed change.

Enforced passivity tends to filter down. Which would explain a few things.

On Iraq, Mr. Panetta says he argued that if we did not leave behind a residual force to provide security and training, the country would slip into chaos with terrorists filling the vacuum. The White House pushed back; things got heated. Mr. Panetta's side came to see the White House as "so eager to rid itself of Iraq that it was willing to withdraw rather than lock in arrangements that would preserve our influence and interests." That is a serious charge. The White House won, and Iraq deteriorated.

Mr. Obama is scored for "failing to lead Congress" out of the sequester. The president's "most conspicuous weakness" is "a frustrating reticence to engage his opponents and rally support for his cause." He is "supremely intelligent"—almost ravenously intelligent—but "sometimes lacks fire." He "avoids the battle, complains, and misses opportunities."

All this is credible and accords with the testimony of others. But it is fair to ask if he cared so much why he didn't leave and speak sooner. It is fair to ask how much he left out. One reads and senses: a lot.

Actually the way the president increasingly comes across, and not only in this book, is as eccentric—a person drawn to political power who doesn't much like politics, or people, and who takes little joy from the wielding of power. Mr. Panetta suggests Mr. Obama isn't good at rah-rah. He's good at rah-rah for himself, just not for other causes.

The book has been received cynically in some precincts and supportively in others, where Mr. Panetta's candor and bravery are lauded. I'm not sure brave is the right word for a man who knows where the bodies are buried and can more than take care of himself in a street fight.

Some say he wrote the book to help detach [Hillary Clinton](#)'s fortunes from those of Mr. Obama. Maybe, but Mr. Panetta is savvy, shrewd and quick to see where things are going. I suspect he's trying to detach his entire *party's* fortunes from Mr. Obama. Reading this book and considering its timing, you get the impression that's the real worthy battle on his mind.

Fiscal Times

Obama's Dismal Performance Is His Personal Failure

Panetta, Gates and Clinton have told how Obama didn't listen.

For Obama, shuffling the deck won't improve his game.

It's a wonder any of Obama's national security team are still around.

by Edward Morrissey

Presidents in political trouble tend to resist change, mainly because they convince themselves of their wisdom. Ronald Reagan once declared that he would “stay the course” on his economic policies when short-term pain caused his approval rating to tumble--and even before the 1984 election arrived, economic growth proved him correct.

Bill Clinton refused to resign after admitting to perjury in a civil lawsuit, and eventually the public forgave him and punished Republicans for attempting to remove him from office. George W. Bush doubled down on his Iraq strategy with the “surge,” and although the political damage from Iraq's decline in 2006-7 did plenty of damage, the strategy worked to end a nascent civil war by 2008.

When the improvements don't materialize, Presidents tend to start looking for new talent. Bush's surge strategy was preceded by the resignation of the unpopular Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and crafted by his replacement Robert Gates. Cabinet members and White House staffers are almost always expendable when the boss needs a boost, a way to signal a change of direction that implies a shift in blame to those departing.

Barack Obama is in trouble now, but in part because the opposite has happened. Gates and his successor Leon Panetta, both widely respected across the political spectrum, have published memoirs of their years in the Obama administration, and they have spared no feelings with their former commander in chief.

Combined with a somewhat milder rebuke from Hillary Clinton's memoirs, we have the unusual specter of having three members of the president's national-security team blaming Obama for not listening to their advice on national security while the President is still in office.

Needless to say, this comes at a bad time for Obama. He has spent all year watching his approval ratings decline, especially on national-security issues over the last few months. Americans have the impression that Obama has not paid attention to the threat of ISIS, having dismissed them as “jayvees” in January, while at the same time Congress heard from intelligence officials that ISIS was poised to seize large swaths of land in Syria and Iraq. Furthermore, Panetta's book confirms what Obama's critics have said all along – that the complete withdrawal of American troops from Iraq [created the vacuum for ISIS to arise](#).

That wasn't the only area in which both Panetta and Clinton criticized Obama. Both memoirs recounted issues with Obama ignoring their advice on Syria starting in 2011 with the Arab Spring revolts. Both advised Obama to start arming moderate rebels then in order to bolster their chances of withstanding the radical Islamists that began flocking to the civil war against Bashar al-Assad. Obama refused, and then in 2013 retreated from a threat to attack Assad over the use of chemical weapons. Without support from the US, both argue in their books, the Free Syrian Army turned into an afterthought as ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra took over the rebellion – and ISIS became powerful enough to declare a caliphate.

Like many other presidents looking at a collapse in confidence among voters, Obama has [signaled that he will clean house after the midterm elections](#). David Ignatius writes for *The Washington Post*

that the President has become “interested in a talent infusion that would add depth and experience,” which his current team lacks.

Chuck Hagel, Panetta’s successor at the Pentagon, had no command experience and no executive experience before taking charge at the Pentagon, but with whom Ignatius sympathizes, saying that Hagel got “tarnished” by a confirmation process that exposed his lack of substance. Similarly, Ignatius defends national security adviser Susan Rice (“still suffers from unfair attacks over the Benghazi affair”), the first-time diplomat in Secretary of State John Kerry (“tireless advocate for Obama’s policies”), and CIA Director John Brennan.

Ignatius’ defense of Brennan is rather comical. Brennan, Ignatius writes, is “an experienced Arabist who can frame Middle East strategy, but he was wounded by an unfortunate fight with Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), chairman of the intelligence committee.” That “unfortunate fight” started when Feinstein wanted to look into CIA activities during the Bush administration, and CIA officials spied on the Senate committee. Brennan should have been cashiered for that.

In fact, with the collapse of Obama’s policies in the Middle East, and with Kerry’s ostentatious and utterly unsuccessful efforts to force Israel and the Palestinians into a peace accord, it’s a wonder that any of Obama’s current national-security team is still around. That applies to James Clapper as well, the director of national intelligence who deliberately misled Congress about the NSA’s activities in domestic snooping, and then admitted that his analysts missed just how badly the Iraqi military would perform against ISIS – no small matter, considering the billions of dollars we spent in training and equipping them. But the collapse of Obama’s foreign policy and confidence in his leadership should have the jobs of some or all of the above on the chopping block.

On the other hand, maybe Obama is worried about what *they’ll* write about him if he hands them their walking papers.

In the end, though, the personnel changes – if they come at all – won’t likely have much impact. When George Bush asked for Rumsfeld’s resignation, it was because Bush had followed Rumsfeld’s advice, for better and worse, and knew a new direction was needed. Reagan asked chief of staff Donald Regan to resign during the Iran-Contra scandal because Reagan needed a new hatchet man to handle the crisis.

A fresh team won’t have the same value in this case. As Panetta, Clinton, and Gates make clear in their memoirs, Obama wasn’t taking their advice anyway. It’s likely that he’s not listening to his current team any more than his previous team, except to the extent that they tell Obama what he wants to hear. The problem is, and has been, the man in the Oval Office.

Contentions

[Keeping America Safe for the Middle Class](#)

by John Steele Gordon

“If Republicans win, we know who they’ll be fighting for,” President Obama said on Tuesday. “Once again, the interests of billionaires will come before the needs of the middle class.”

Where did he say it? [According](#) to the *New York Post*, in the hyper-exclusive Conyers Farm area of very upscale Greenwich, Connecticut. Conyers Farm has ten-acre zoning. He was speaking at a

fundraiser at the \$26-million estate of a man named, believe it or not, Rich Richman. His audience consisted of people who had paid up to \$32,400 a head to have dinner with him. He had flown up from New York City, where he had earlier attended a fundraiser hosted by George Soros (net worth \$24 billion) and Paul Tudor Jones (net worth \$4.3 billion). The flight was in a convoy of four helicopters and they landed at the [Greenwich Polo Club](#). Polo, of course, is the most expensive sport you can play on land. (A polo field measures 300 by 160 yards, bigger than nine football fields.)

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National Review

[The Cartagena-Hooker Cover-Up](#)

If the White House would falsify records about this, it can deceive the public about larger issues.

by Jonah Goldberg

In news that must have left my friends at the New York Post — never mind the gang at The Daily Show — with a renewed confidence that ours is a just and beneficent God, the White House has been caught covering up a scandal involving a Cartagena hooker.

The phrase “Cartagena hooker” alone is a mellifluous gift to ink-stained wretches everywhere, but the revelation that the White House reassigned the alleged client of the aforementioned Andean call girl to the State Department’s office of “Global Women’s Issues” is the sort of flourish Tom Wolfe or Chris Buckley wouldn’t dare attempt as satire.

Let us back up for a moment. Two years ago, the Secret Service was humiliated in a terrible scandal. Agents sent to prepare for a presidential trip to Colombia availed themselves of the local service industry, as it were. The local cops were called in when one agent refused to compensate a woman for services rendered, contradicting ancient advice about the oldest profession: You don’t pay for the sex; you pay for the hooker to leave. Hats off to the Cartagena constabulary for their diligence in enforcing contract rights. Ten agents lost their jobs.

On April 23, 2012, then–White House press secretary Jay Carney said there were “no specific, credible allegations of misconduct by anyone on the White House advance team or the White House staff.”

“Nevertheless,” Carney said, “out of due diligence, the White House Counsel’s office has conducted a review . . . [and] came to the conclusion that there’s no indication that any member of the White House advance team engaged in any improper conduct or behavior.”

If the *Washington Post’s* exhaustive exclusive this week is to be believed, that was what experts would call a lie. Secret Service investigators told the White House that Jonathan Dach also had too

good a time in Cartagena. Dach, then a Yale law student, was a volunteer for the White House advance team. The lead investigator for the Department of Homeland Security – which oversees the Secret Service – says he was told “to withhold and alter certain information in the report of investigation because it was potentially embarrassing to the administration.”

One such piece of information was that Dach “was not charged for additional guest as a benefit of Hilton Honor Member.”

Membership has its privileges.

That guest, investigators found, had advertised herself as a prostitute on the Internet, complete with a photo of herself scantily clad in front of signs that read, “Summit of the Americas.” Perhaps she was just a student of international diplomacy specializing in ameliorating the deficiencies of soft power?

The lead investigator and two of his aides say they were put on administrative leave when they questioned what they believed to be a naked political cover-up.

If the allegations are true, we’re left with this question: Why did the White House go to such lengths to conceal the event? Dach broke no laws in Cartagena, the alleged tryst took place in a so-called “tolerance zone” where prostitution is legal. Surely the White House isn’t against tolerance.

There are two likely answers. The first is obvious and laid out in the *Post’s* reporting. The White House didn’t want a scandal in an election year. The second answer, also suggested by the report, is that while Dach was an inconsequential gnome in the White House’s massive political operation, Dach’s father, Leslie, was a big donor to the Obama campaign. A former lobbyist for Wal-Mart, Leslie Dach gave \$23,900 in 2008 and worked with Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move!” campaign.

Neither answer excludes the other, and both speak volumes about this White House’s problems. The underlying scandal is fairly minor. But if the White House would falsify records and lie to the public about this, is it really so hard to imagine that it would deceive the public – and Congress – about larger issues like, say, Benghazi? (Just this week, former Obama secretary of defense Leon Panetta told Fox News’s Bill O’Reilly that the infamous White House talking points on the attack were essentially bogus.)

But it also speaks to the seedy way Obama talks about politics generally. The president loves to denounce a cynical system where politics comes before the public good. He rails about a system where fat cats live by a different set of rules than the little guy, and money buys special treatment and access. But the way he operates runs completely counter to all that. Which is why the only person to come out of this scandal in an honorable light is the Cartagena hooker.

National Journal

Why the Colombian Hooker Scandal Matters

More than sex, the story is about nepotism, favoritism, credibility, and the president's safety.

by Ron Fournier

I don't have a strong opinion on Colombian hookers. The after-hours wongs of a 25-year-old White House volunteer make no difference to me. There are bigger stories better suited for the word

"scandal" than the 2012 drinking-and-carousing embarrassment that cost 10 Secret Service agents their jobs.

But I don't like government cover-ups, favoritism, and nepotism—all of which are exposed in the latest *Washington Post* investigation of the U.S. Secret Service. The story by Carol D. Leonnig and David Nakamura ("[White House Knew of Possible Tie to Cartagena](#)") also hints at a rift between the president's political and security teams that makes me worry about the safety of Barack Obama and future presidents.

As nearly two dozen Secret Service agents and members of the military were punished or fired following a 2012 prostitution scandal in Colombia, Obama administration officials repeatedly denied that anyone from the White House was involved.

But new details drawn from government documents and interviews show that senior White House aides were given information at the time suggesting that a prostitute was an overnight guest in the hotel room of a presidential advance-team member—yet that information was never thoroughly investigated or publicly acknowledged.

Resist the temptation to laugh or roll your eyes at the story's salacious details. Consider why it matters.

The White House didn't tell the truth. Small children are taught that any lie is bad, even a small one, because it infects the whole of their credibility. Same goes for the White House, particularly when the public's faith in President Obama's word is already in [free-fall](#) due to an epidemic of half-truths ("*Violent protest outside of our embassy—sparked by this hateful [video](#)*"), empty promises ("*No one will take away your health care [plan](#)*"), and outright lies ("*Notwittingly*").

Leonnig and Nakamura build a credible case against White House contentions that nobody from the West Wing was involved in the April 14, 2012, incident. The Secret Service twice shared evidence suggesting that Jonathan Dach was involved in the wrongdoing, including hotel records and first-hand accounts. A lead government investigator told Senate staffers that he felt pressure from superiors to withhold evidence because a link to the White House—even one this tenuous—would be "potentially embarrassing to the administration."

Dach has denied he was involved. And dismissing the story, former National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor said on Twitter it would be "absurd" to think that the White House would risk so much to cover for an advance-team volunteer. That's a weak defense, because the Obama White House is known to overzealously defend its reputation against the tiniest slights. It's entirely believable that Obama's public-relations team—the

Keystone Cops of crisis management—went heavy on the whitewash.

Merit, not nepotism, should lead to White House work. Dach's father, Leslie Dach, is a respected Democratic operative-turned-donor who gave \$23,900 to the Democratic Party in 2008 to help elect Obama. He worked closely with the White House while serving as Wal-Mart's top lobbyist and now works at the Health and Human Services Department, where he is helping to

implement Obamacare. The younger Dach is a Yale law student—no doubt a bright kid. But the country is full of bright kids who would volunteer for White House road trips.

The White House played favorites in the investigation. Nepotism in hiring is one thing.

Favoritism is another, perhaps worse, sin, particularly when the investigation and punishment reek of elitism. This is how *The Post* describes the White House's handling of Dach's involvement.

The information that the Secret Service shared with the White House included hotel records and firsthand accounts—the same types of evidence the agency and military relied on to determine who in their ranks was involved ...

The [Dach] inquiry conducted by White House officials was less extensive than those undertaken by Secret Service and Pentagon officials, according to several government officials familiar with the probes. Those agencies had devoted considerable resources to their investigations, conducting extensive interviews and sending teams to Colombia for more than two weeks to track down and interview prostitutes and hotel staff members.

The Secret Service also administered multiple polygraph tests to each of the agents, asking whether they had brought prostitutes to their rooms and paid for services, according to several agents and federal records.

Blake Hounshell, editorial director of *Politico*, captured the disparity in this tweet:

[@jamespmanley](#) yeah but it's rich kid gets a pass, working stiffs get screwed

A breach of trust between the Secret Service and the White House could be dangerous.The relationship between the president and the people who would die to protect him is fraught with complexity. The agency works for the president, but the president must heed Secret Service protocols.

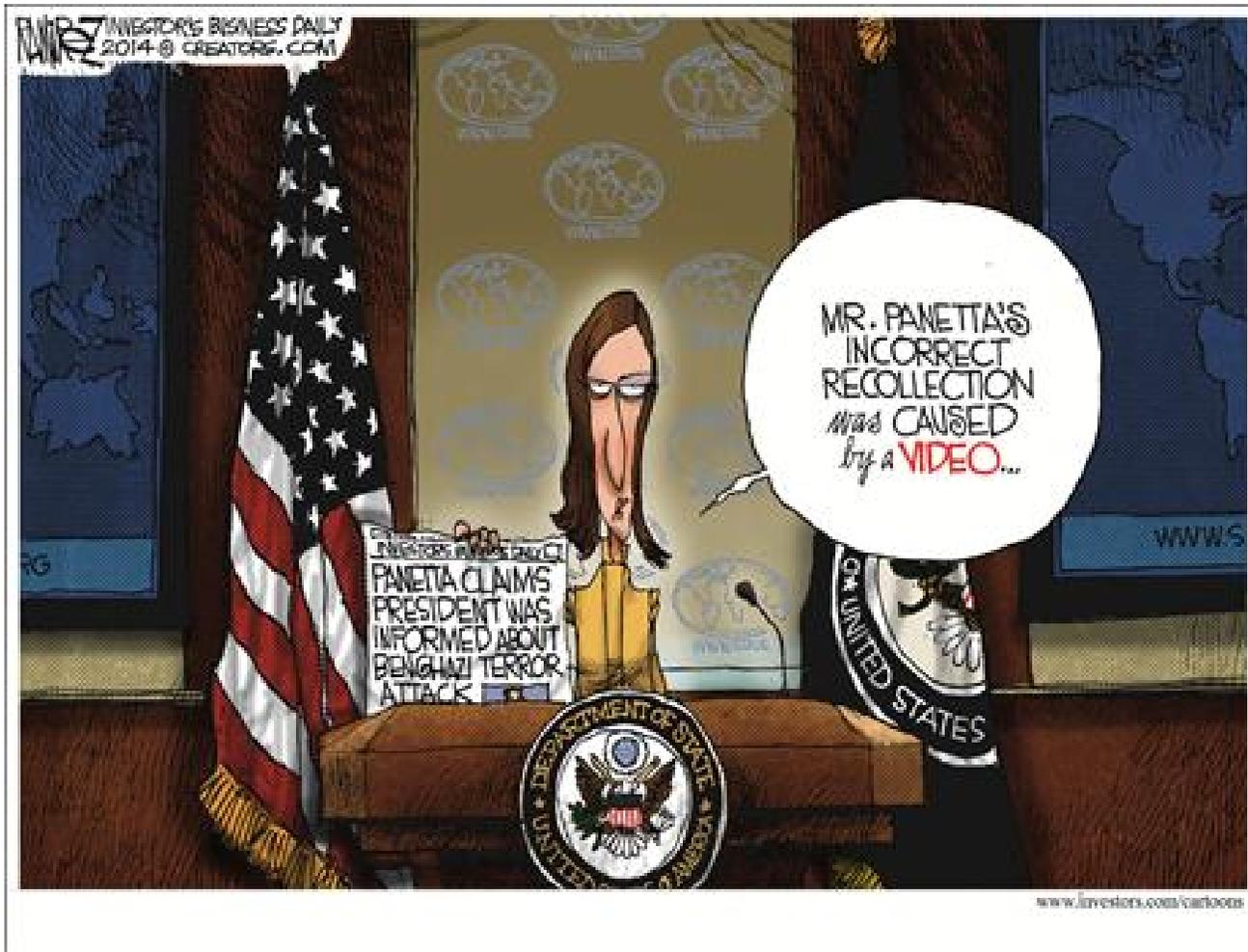
It only works—the president is only safe—if there is mutual trust. The president must harbor no doubts that the agency is doing everything possible to keep him safe, and that everything the agents see and hear will remain confidential. The agents must know that the president has their backs. From *The Post's* story:

Former and current Secret Service agents said they are angry at the White House's public insistence that none of its team members were involved and its private decision to not fully investigate one of its own—while their colleagues had their careers ruined or hampered.

Ten members of the Secret Service—ranging from younger, lower-level officers assigned to rope-line security to seasoned members of a counterassault team—lost their jobs because of their actions in Cartagena. The agents were told that they jeopardized national security by drinking excessively and having contact with foreign nationals.

They were treated "radically differently by different parts of the same executive branch," said Larry Berger, a lawyer who represented many of the agents, who were union members of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association.

It's one thing to lose the public's trust. Messing with the bond between a president and the Secret Service is outright dangerous—and could set a precedent that outlasts Obama. That's why this isn't just about hookers.

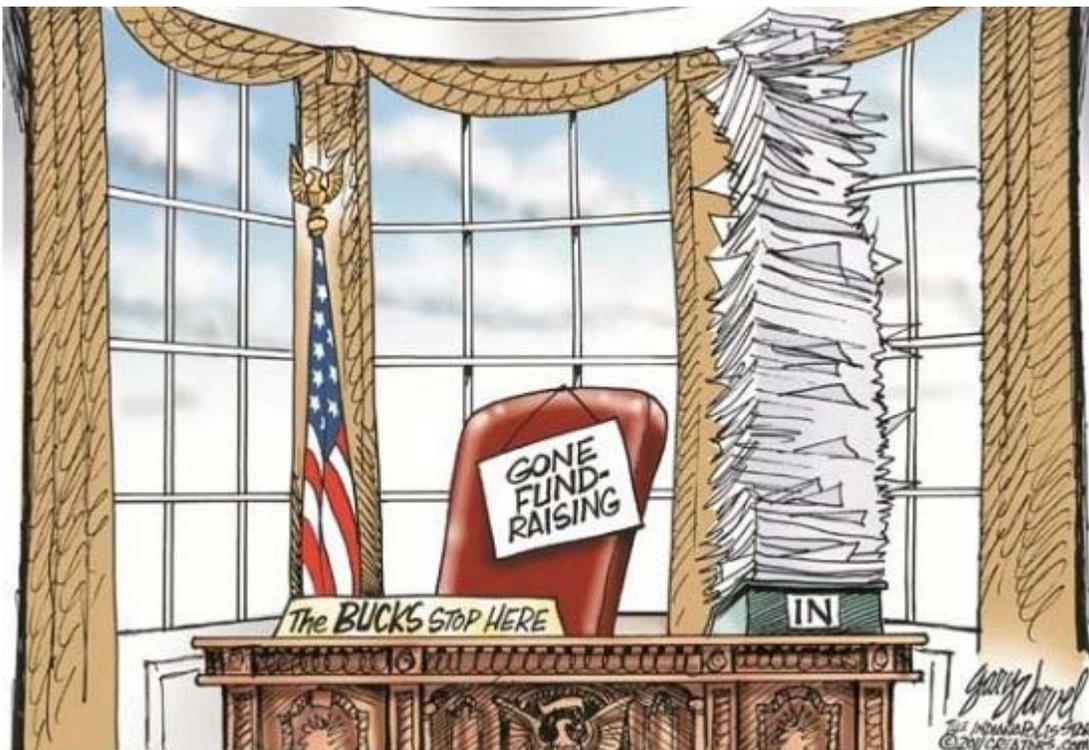


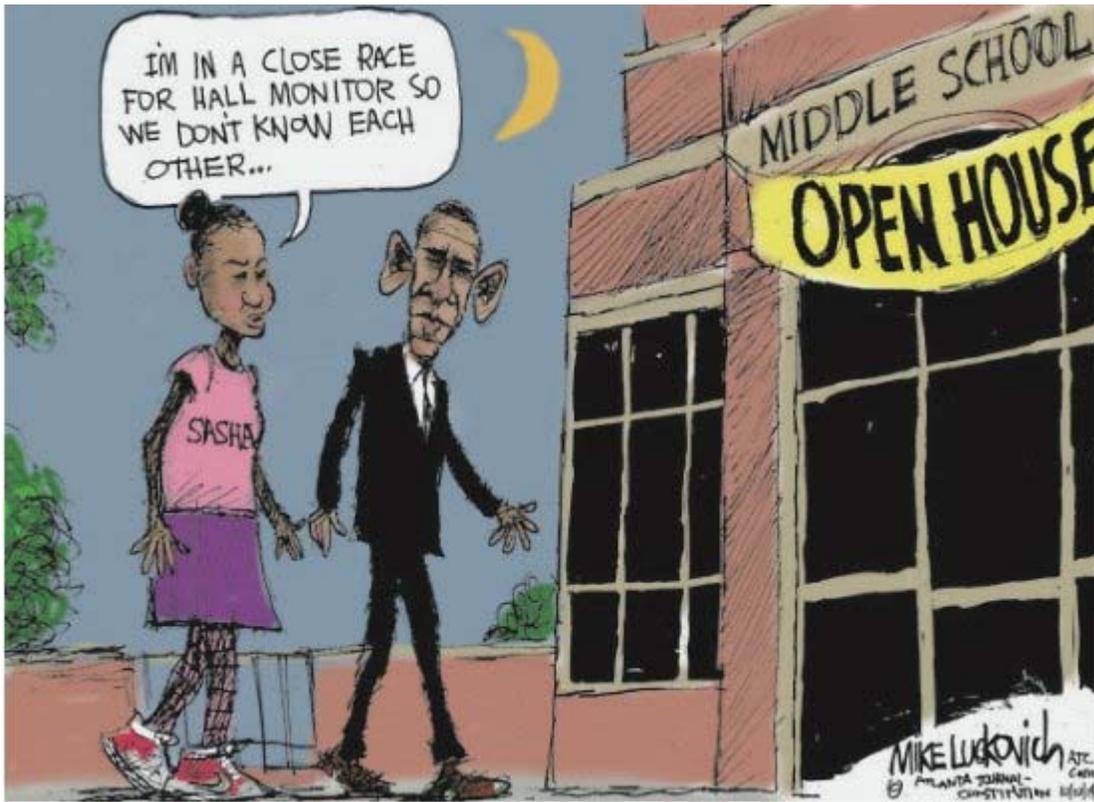


JUST SO WE'RE CLEAR:
THE GUY WHO CANCELED
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THEN LET EBOLA LOOSE
WANTS YOU TO KNOW
HOW DANGEROUS
REPUBLICAN POLICIES ARE.

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