

October 2, 2014

Remember when the Park Service was doing the tyrant's bidding by trying to make the government shut down hurt as much as possible? Road & Track has the story of a biker who violated the ban in the Great Smoky Mountains Park, wrote about it, and got three citations and 40 hours of community service for his trouble.

If you find yourself standing before a federal judge, the last thing you want is to feel your attorney go stiff beside you. His Honor looked at the paperwork in front of him and paused. His eyes shot over his rimless glasses and landed first on me, then my attorney, who could not have performed a more perfect interpretation of 2x12 plank if we had entered into a life-and-death game of charades. It was inspired.

"Mr. Bowman, I'm trying to understand why your alleged offense occurred on one day and your citations were written almost two weeks later."

Ah. That.

Rangers don't take kindly to publicly mocking the government shutdown by riding a motorcycle through a closed national park. That's especially true when you write a piece about it. I'd netted three citations for my efforts, including traveling the wrong way on a one-way road, ignoring a public closure, and operating a motor vehicle off of designated trails.

The three yellow slips of paper that showed up in the mail two weeks later succinctly summed up one brilliant afternoon in the park last October. Combined, these were good for up to 18 months of incarceration or \$15,000 in fines. To make matters more endearing, the offenses occurred on federal land, which meant each was a genuine misdemeanor, the kind that go in the box under "HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED OF A MISDEMEANOR" on job applications and unpleasant conversations with in-laws.

"Oh, I see. It says here you wrote an article for RoadandTrack.com titled, 'A 250cc middle finger to the government shutdown.'"

That's the one. ...

OK, back to the guy in the white house who blames everyone else for his mistakes.

Andrew Malcolm is first up.

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It's easier for Obama to do because of a less than shark-like D.C. media and because words heard come and go so fast it's difficult for listeners to parse and analyze before the Talker-in-Chief is off gabbing about something else. All of which, of course, he knows full well.

Take this exchange with "60 Minutes" Steve Kroft: "Is this the most difficult period of your presidency, the biggest challenge of your presidency, this period we're in right now?"

Pause the tape. Now, Obama knows if he agrees, that's the night's top headline: "Worst time of my presidency: Obama." So, he gives Kroft nothing on that subject and pivots to recalling the ancient, reviled Bush era to change the topic away from himself. Resume tape.

"It's a significant period. But if you think about what I walked into when I came into office...."

Can you imagine a headline like this: "Obama says U.S. in a 'significant period'" Of course not. ...

Even the NY Times is not going to buy into the shameless lying by the president. Paul Mirengoff has the story.

Peter Baker and Eric Schmitt of the New York Times destroy President Obama's attempt to shift blame to the intelligence community for his lack of focus on ISIS:

'By late last year, classified American intelligence reports painted an increasingly ominous picture of a growing threat from Sunni extremists in Syria, according to senior intelligence and military officials. Just as worrisome, they said, were reports of deteriorating readiness and morale among troops next door in Iraq.

But the reports, they said, generated little attention in a White House consumed with multiple brush fires and reluctant to be drawn back into Iraq. "Some of us were pushing the reporting, but the White House just didn't pay attention to it," said a senior American intelligence official. "They were preoccupied with other crises," the official added. "This just wasn't a big priority."

What "crises" were diverting the White House's attention late last year from the rise of terrorist force more dangerous than al Qaeda? The botched Obamacare roll-out? ...

Max Boot has more.

... Of course Obama won't accept responsibility for pulling out of Iraq either—he blames that too on the Iraqis for failing to agree to grant U.S. troops legal immunity in a status of forces agreed ratified by their parliament. Yet it turns out this was a bogus issue all along. How do I know? Because Obama has now sent 1,600, and counting, U.S. troops to Iraq without any legal immunity or any Status of Forces Agreement ratified by parliament. If he's doing it now, why couldn't he do it in 2012? Simply because he didn't want to—Iraqi leaders almost certainly would have acceded if Obama had shown the will to remain past 2011.

Rather than accepting blame for his own misjudgments, Obama stubbornly continues to defend his mistakes such as failing to arm moderate Syrian fighters in 2011-2012 as most of his security cabinet was urging him to do. "For us to just go blind on that would have been counterproductive and would not have helped the situation. But we also would have committed us to a much more significant role inside of Syria," Obama said.

Yet Obama's own officials, including Robert Ford, his former ambassador to Damascus, have said that the U.S. has had the information for years that it needs to figure out who's who among the Syrian rebels. It's just that Obama refused to act on that information precisely because he refused to accept a "more significant role inside of Syria" even if such a role could have stopped the growth of ISIS.

If Obama is going to rebuild shattered confidence in his foreign policy, he needs to accept blame for what he did wrong before and act to correct those mistakes now instead of scapegoating others and taking refuge in half-measures such as his current air strikes without boots on the ground, which he characterized on 60 Minutes as a “counterterrorism operation” rather than “the sort of occupying armies that characterized the Iraq and Afghan war.”

Peter Wehner says he's getting his press secretary to lie for him.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest has a problem. In a misguided effort to protect his boss, the president, he is continuing to lie.

I use the word lie advisedly but, I believe, correctly. Here's why.

In an exchange yesterday with ABC's Jonathan Karl, Mr. Earnest continues to peddle the fiction that President Obama did not have ISIS/ISIL in mind when he referred to it in an interview in the New Yorker as a “jayvee team.” Several weeks ago I showed why that claim is false, and so have many others, including Glenn Kessler, the fact-checker for the Washington Post. ...

More and more liberals are fed up too. Here's **Josh Kraushaar** in National Journal.

In attempting to downplay the political damage from a slew of second-term controversies, President Obama has counted on the American people having a very short memory span and a healthy suspension of disbelief. The time-tested strategy for Obama: Claim he's in the dark about his own administration's activities, blame the mess on subordinates, and hope that with the passage of time, all will be forgotten. Harry Truman, the president isn't. He's more likely to pass the buck.

His latest eyebrow-raiser came on 60 Minutes on Sunday, when the president blamed the failure to anticipate the rise of ISIS on his intelligence community for not informing him of the growing threat. “I think our head of the intelligence community, Jim Clapper, has acknowledged that I think they underestimated what had been taking place in Syria,” Obama said. Most early news reports dutifully pinned the blame on the intelligence agencies, with the president escaping any further scrutiny.

But anyone following the news over the past year would have been better informed than the commander in chief. As NBC foreign affairs correspondent Richard Engel said on MSNBC Monday: “It's surprising that the president said that U.S. intelligence missed this one, because it seems that U.S. intelligence was the only group that missed this one. Everyone knew that Islamic extremists were on the rise in Syria and in Iraq; it was well documented. The extremists were publicizing their activities online—they were bragging about it. Journalists, including us, were interviewing foreign fighters. This was no state secret.”

Former Democratic Rep. Joe Sestak of Pennsylvania, the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to Congress, told National Journal that the president was wrong to pass the buck. “As commander in chief, you're accountable. ...

Yes, the country was dumb enough to return him to office, but American Interest reports 60 Minutes audience dropped by half when the president was on. *President Obama gave an interview on 60 Minutes this past weekend. It seems that few people were watching.*

Deadline Hollywood, self-described as “[t]he definitive choice for industry insiders,” noted that 60 Minutes ratings were “off by 69% from last Sunday, when it directly followed the game.” Meaning that an NFL game preceding 60 Minutes is responsible for the show’s typically strong ratings. Specifically, 60 Minutes had 17.9 million viewers on September 21 but only 9.7 million viewers the following week on September 28, when Steve Kroft interviewed the president. ...

Matthew Continetti posts on the ways the Clintons control the press. Amy Chozick covers Hillary Clinton for the New York Times. She is an enterprising and dedicated reporter, and many of her stories have annoyed the 2016 presidential frontrunner. This week Chozick covered a meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative. It was her turn to be annoyed.

Chozick’s most revealing article about the event had nothing to do with the scheduled agenda, or with the opaque, labyrinthine, and seedy finances of the Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation, or with the tsunami of clichés from the stage about global warming, gender equality, wellness, empowerment, polarization, Mohammed Yunus, sustainable development, globalization, Palm Oil alternatives, uplift, board diversity, education access, green energy, Malala, information technology, organic farming, public-private partnerships, and #YesAllWomen. The article had to do with Chozick’s bathroom habits.

Every time she felt the urge, a representative of the Clintons would accompany her to the ladies’ room. Every time. And not only would the “friendly 20-something press aide” stroll with Chozick to the entrance of the john. She also “waited outside the stall.” As though Chozick were a little girl.

If it was not embarrassing enough to be chaperoned to the water closet by a recent college graduate no doubt beaming with righteousness and an entirely undeserved and illusory sense of self-importance, some earnest and vacant and desperate-to-be-hip Millennial whose affiliation with the Clintons, whose involvement in their various schemes, consists of nothing more than her uniform of white shirt and silk scarf—if this was not on its own an indignity and an insult for a correspondent of the New York Times, when Chozick asked for comment on the bathroom police, she received the following response: ...

Road & Track

Busted: Paying the price for ignoring the government shutdown

Worth every second.

by Zach Bowman



If you find yourself standing before a federal judge, the last thing you want is to feel your attorney go stiff beside you. His Honor looked at the paperwork in front of him and paused. His eyes shot over his rimless glasses and landed first on me, then my attorney, who could not have performed a more perfect interpretation of 2x12 plank if we had entered into a life-and-death game of charades. It was *inspired*.

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“Oh, I see. It says here you wrote an article for RoadandTrack.com titled, ‘A 250cc middle finger to the government shutdown.’”

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The adorable court reporter looked up from her typing and flashed me a sly smile. Her blue eyes were bright with the look fathers pray they’ll never see their daughter give a boy dumb enough to ride a motorcycle *and* wind up in court over it. Laughs sprung up around the courtroom, my attorney loosened up, and for a moment, I thought the judge might even crack a grin. That was optimistic on my part.

Instead, he asked if I understood the deal before me. When the citations first showed up, my lawyer wanted to enter a not guilty plea, but doing so felt like a lie. I broke into the park to prove a point about the idiocy of the shutdown, and I wrote about the experience to remind people how truly special our public lands are. Instead of pleading guilty, my lawyer managed the impossible by negotiating a deal: swap my fines and time for 40 hours of community service in the park. When I told the judge I understood, I was out the door, deal in hand. A month later, I woke up at 4:30 a.m. and hauled myself an hour east to do my time.

Everyone should have to deep clean a public toilet at least once, just to get a first-hand feel for how horrible humanity is as a species. When I arrived at the Sugarlands Visitor Center, I had no idea what my supervisor had in store. Long days breaking rock? Trail maintenance? Battling poison ivy and copperheads? Nope. My 40 hours would be spent helping out with the maintenance crew at the most popular visitor center in the park.

That meant cleaning the un-air-conditioned public toilets twice a day for five days straight, among other charming tasks. Walking into the women’s side for the first time was like stepping onto the scene of some bizarre natural disaster. It was if a small tornado had frolicked from stall to stall, flinging ribbons of toilet paper at the walls with vicious intent as it went.

It was, in a word, astonishing.

This wasn’t my first brush with janitorial work. My grandfather was a font of quiet lessons, and among those was the notion that there’s always work for a man who’s willing to do it. That idea carried me through a long line of shitty high school jobs that required intimate knowledge of the care and use of a toilet brush. If I’m honest, the community service was refreshing. Get a task, complete the task, move on.

Each day started with a solid hour of vacuuming, sucking up the pebbles, gum wrappers, and lint visitors tracked into the gift shop and theater, followed by trash duty and the first round of bathroom cleaning. Then came a break, followed by cleaning the park headquarters. I dusted. I cleaned glass. I took out trash. I polished brass handrails.

It all gave me plenty of time to contemplate the transaction I’d entered into. I had swapped 40 hours of my life, plus 10 hours of commuting, for two perfect hours in a park I’ve loved all my life. I kept waiting for the scales to tip, for the realization to dawn on me that clearly this wasn’t worth it, that it wasn’t an equitable trade, and I’d never do it again so long as I lived. It never happened. The truth is, it was fucking worth it.

Last week, I headed back up to Cades Cove for the first time since my community service. A friend and I took the legal way, winding the 24 miles through the park, then following the loop around to the back side where the eight-mile dirt road to Route 129 begins. It was hard not to feel a little

jaded. We spent the first half of the day slinking around the cars and trucks in the Cove where they dawdled. A driver in an F-350 from Michigan laid on the horn as I rode past for no other reason than I was moving and he wasn't. I understood his frustration.

It's what made that afternoon last year so perfect. The cool air on my neck, the crunch of the first of autumn's fallen leaves on the gravel. They're memories I unfold often. I trace their lines when I need them most. I was more alone in the Cove then than anyone had been since before the Cherokee called it their own. It was my park as I always hope it will be and it so rarely is.

Investor's Business Daily

[Like autumn leaves, Obama's story changes to match the season](#)

by Andrew Malcolm

Remember back in the 2012 presidential campaign when Barack Obama said things like:

"Al Qaeda is on the run. We have decimated its core leadership. And Osama bin Laden is dead. But I don't want Americans to think the struggle against terror is over. It's not, by any means. We have a long struggle ahead. By 2014, new terrorist groups may spring up and we'll be back fighting in the Middle East."

Neither do we.

That's because, while the Democrat incumbent said the first part over and over to imply he'd lead the nation to victory over Islamic extremists, the second warning part he left out. Not by accident, of course.

Now, as is his habit, Obama is muddying the waters with superfluous words and thoughts to cover his lies, gaffes and distortions. He warns of making generalizations, then makes them. He smoothly dodges and deflects questions, appearing to listeners' ears to answer while changing the subject from his responsibility to someone else's fault.

It's easier for Obama to do because of a less than shark-like D.C. media and because words heard come and go so fast it's difficult for listeners to parse and analyze before the Talker-in-Chief is off gabbing about something else. All of which, of course, he knows full well.

Take this exchange with ["60 Minutes"](#) Steve Kroft: "Is this the most difficult period of your presidency, the biggest challenge of your presidency, this period we're in right now?"

Pause the tape. Now, Obama knows if he agrees, that's the night's top headline: "Worst time of my presidency: Obama." So, he gives Kroft nothing on that subject and pivots to recalling the ancient, reviled Bush era to change the topic away from himself. Resume tape.

"It's a significant period. But if you think about what I walked into when I came into office...."

Can you imagine a headline like this: "Obama says U.S. in a 'significant period'" Of course not.

Later, Kroft: "Are you saying that this is not really a war?"

Obama's spent his entire national political life belittling war, talking of ending them, bragging of ending them. (The Peace Prize winner leaves out his Libyan war, which doesn't fit his narrative.) Even the war on terror has become a campaign. All of which, he thinks, entitles him to cut military defenses.

Obama knows he would make news if he argued with Kroft about what's a war and what's not a war. So, he talks off in a different direction. Here's his non-reply:

"Well, what I'm saying is that we are assisting Iraq in a very real battle that's taking place on their soil, with their troops. But we are providing air support. And it is in our interest to do that because ISIL represents sort of a hybrid of not just the terrorist network, but one with territorial ambitions, and some of the strategy and tactics of an army."

Kroft points out that just two years ago in that same White House Obama talked of having decimated al Qaeda. Now its affiliates and offshoots hold large parts of Iraq and Syria while Islamic militias control all of Libya.

Sigh. The wise, patient president must instruct the media rep. "If you'll recall, Steve, you had an international network in al Qaeda between Afghanistan and Pakistan, headed by Bin Laden. And that structure we have rendered ineffective. But what I also said, and this was two years ago and a year ago, is that you have regional groups with regional ambitions and territorial ambitions." Actually, he didn't.

Obama continues: "And what also has not changed is the kind of violent, ideologically driven extremism that has taken root in too much of the Muslim world." Do ya think, Sherlock? If this violent extremism has continued all this time, why was Obama in such a rush to exit Iraq with no residual U.S. troops there? Peace in our time.

Next up is Afghanistan where the Taliban, like buzzards perched in a dead tree, awaits the departure of all American combat troops in just 52 days.

Time to change the subject again. "And this week, in my speech to the United Nations General Assembly, I made very clear we are not at war against Islam." *Wait!* What's this doing here? Who said we were at war with Islam? And what's that got to do with the previous question?

Nothing.

What's that sound? Can you hear a bus approaching? Kroft asks how ISIS gained control of so much territory? "Was that a complete surprise to you?"

Obama: "Well I think, our head of the intelligence community, Jim Clapper, has acknowledged that I think they underestimated what had been taking place in Syria." *Ka-thunk*. The wheels roll over Clapper's body.

Actually, that obedient Obama dimwit is director of national intelligence because his predecessor was warning too strongly of the rise of ISIS and others. And that conflicted with Obama's set narrative of al Qaeda's terrorism being on the path to defeat.

On the Nov. 4 midterm elections, Obama sounds confident his party could hold the Senate, which suggests Democrats can ignore his email fundraising appeals and sit comfortably at home not even bothering to vote. "The country," the president asserted with a straight face, "is definitely better off than we were when I came into office."

Can Obama really convince economically-battered Americans of that in the next five weeks? "All I'm doing," Obama claimed, "is presenting the facts."

So, if those dummy voters who reelected the president turn on him now, as polls indicate they are, that's not Obama's fault either. He's just the victim again.

Power Line

[New York Times exposes Obama's shameless ISIS blame-shifting](#)

by Paul Mirengoff

[Peter Baker and Eric Schmitt](#) of the New York Times destroy President Obama's attempt to shift blame to the intelligence community for his lack of focus on ISIS:

By late last year, classified American intelligence reports painted an increasingly ominous picture of a growing threat from Sunni extremists in Syria, according to senior intelligence and military officials. Just as worrisome, they said, were reports of deteriorating readiness and morale among troops next door in Iraq.

But the reports, they said, generated little attention in a White House consumed with multiple brush fires and reluctant to be drawn back into Iraq. "Some of us were pushing the reporting, but the White House just didn't pay attention to it," said a senior American intelligence official. "They were preoccupied with other crises," the official added. "This just wasn't a big priority."

What "crises" were diverting the White House's attention late last year from the rise of terrorist force more dangerous than al Qaeda? The botched Obamacare roll-out?

It may be true that the intelligence community failed to predict the precise speed of ISIS's blitz through Iraq. But, as Baker and Schmitt affirm, the picture it painted for Obama was an "ominous" one. Certainly, that picture was inconsistent with [Obama's claim](#) that ISIS is al Qaeda's "jayvee."

Obama offered this criminally glib characterization in response to a question by David Remnick that specifically mentioned ISIS's taking of Fallujah. Obama was not concerned about ISIS's success in Fallujah, writing it off as the product of that city's traditional sectarianism.

But that's not what our intelligence services were telling him:

On New Year's Day, convoys of up to 100 trucks flying the black flag of Al Qaeda and armed with mounted heavy machine guns and anti-aircraft guns stormed into Falluja and Ramadi as they sought to establish an Islamic caliphate stretching across national borders. Their victories sent a chill through the American military, which had fought some of its bloodiest battles in that part of Iraq. . . .

And yet American officials said there was no serious talk of intervening directly at the time. Since Falluja and Ramadi had long been hotbeds of Sunni extremist sentiment, American officials assumed the Islamic State could be checked there and eventually rolled back.

Intelligence agencies warned against such an assumption.

The facts, then, are clear. Our intelligence agencies warned Obama not to assume that ISIS could be halted in Fallujah and Ramadi. Obama not only ignored the warning; he ridiculed it, as his remarks to Remnick make clear.

And now, he is blaming his failure to act on false claims that he wasn't sufficiently warned.

America has had its share of dishonest presidents. But I don't think we've ever had one as shameless as Obama.

Contentions

Obama's Mistakes Come Back to Haunt Him

by Max Boot

President Obama sounded much tougher when he spoke at the United Nations last week than he has in a long time. But for anyone expecting the president to become a born-again hawk and repent of his earlier retreatism, the *60 Minutes* [interview](#) that aired Sunday should be chastening.

The headline-grabbing statement was the president blaming the intelligence community for underestimating ISIS and overestimating the capacity of the Iraqi army. And it's true that Jim Clapper, the director of national intelligence, did recently [tell David Ignatius](#), "We underestimated ISIL [the Islamic State] and overestimated the fighting capability of the Iraqi army" although he also said that "his analysts had reported the group's emergence and its 'prowess and capability,' as well as the 'deficiencies' of the Iraqi military." So the president can take refuge in asserting that he was simply claiming Clapper's own self-critique.

But I doubt that will seem very convincing to intelligence community personnel who will feel that the president is throwing them under the bus—hiding policy errors behind a front of supposed intelligence failures. Indeed, the *New York Times* today [quotes](#) one "senior American intelligence official" as saying: "Some of us were pushing the reporting, but the White House just didn't pay attention to it. They were preoccupied with other crises. This just wasn't a big priority."

The reality is that it didn't require any specialized intelligence apparatus to know that the threat from jihadists like ISIS would grow or that the capabilities of the Iraqi army would decline if we left Iraq and Syria alone, as we have largely done since 2011. I and many other analysts were [noting](#) at the time that the departure of U.S. troops from Iraq was a "tragedy" that would leave Iraqis ill-prepared to defend themselves and that the U.S. failure to help the moderate Syrian opposition would [cede ground](#) to "Sunnis extremists such as al Qaeda." That Obama chose to ignore such warnings was not the fault of his intelligence personnel; it was his own fault for believing what he wanted to believe—namely that the U.S. could retreat from the Middle East without increasing the danger of our enemies gaining ground.

Such a belief was fantastic enough in 2011; it became utterly preposterous when in January of this year Fallujah and Ramadi fell to ISIS. Yet even then Obama did nothing for another nine months. It took the fall of Mosul in June to shake him out of his complacency—although not to get him off the golf course—and at last try to come up with some strategy to stop ISIS. Again, this isn't the intelligence community's fault. It's Obama's fault, and he would enhance his own credibility if he would accept some of the blame for this failure.

Instead he is once again pointing fingers, not only at the intelligence agencies but also at former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. “When we left, we had left them a democracy that was intact, a military that was well equipped, and the ability then to chart their own course,” Obama said. “And that opportunity was squandered over the course of five years or so because the prime minister, Maliki, was much more interested in consolidating his Shiite base and very suspicious of the Sunnis and the Kurds, who make up the other two-thirds of the country.”

True enough, but this analysis ignores the important role of Obama’s own administration in helping Maliki to win a second term in 2010 when he actually won fewer parliamentary seats than Ayad Allawi. It also ignores the fact that those of us who were in favor of keeping U.S. troops in Iraq past 2011 (and that includes senior U.S. military commanders on the ground) believed it was essentially in no small part to allow the U.S. to continue exerting pressure on Maliki to stay non-sectarian. That Maliki would unleash his inner sectarian as soon as we left was also utterly predictable and cannot be blamed on any intelligence failure.

Of course Obama won’t accept responsibility for pulling out of Iraq either—he blames that too on the Iraqis for failing to agree to grant U.S. troops legal immunity in a status of forces agreed ratified by their parliament. Yet it turns out this was a bogus issue all along. How do I know? Because Obama has now sent 1,600, and counting, U.S. troops to Iraq without any legal immunity or any Status of Forces Agreement ratified by parliament. If he’s doing it now, why couldn’t he do it in 2012? Simply because he didn’t want to—Iraqi leaders almost certainly would have acceded if Obama had shown the will to remain past 2011.

Rather than accepting blame for his own misjudgments, Obama stubbornly continues to defend his mistakes such as failing to arm moderate Syrian fighters in 2011-2012 as most of his security cabinet was urging him to do. “For us to just go blind on that would have been counterproductive and would not have helped the situation. But we also would have committed us to a much more significant role inside of Syria,” Obama said.

Yet Obama’s own officials, including Robert Ford, his former ambassador to Damascus, have [said that](#) the U.S. has had the information for years that it needs to figure out who’s who among the Syrian rebels. It’s just that Obama refused to act on that information precisely because he refused to accept a “more significant role inside of Syria” even if such a role could have stopped the growth of ISIS.

If Obama is going to rebuild shattered confidence in his foreign policy, he needs to accept blame for what he did wrong before and act to correct those mistakes now instead of scapegoating others and taking refuge in half-measures such as his current air strikes without boots on the ground, which he characterized on *60 Minutes* as a “counterterrorism operation” rather than “the sort of occupying armies that characterized the Iraq and Afghan war.”

Contentions

[Our Lying President and His Lying Press Secretary](#)

by Peter Wehner

White House press secretary Josh Earnest has a problem. In a misguided effort to protect his boss, the president, he is continuing to lie.

I use the word *lie* advisedly but, I believe, correctly. Here’s why.

In [an exchange yesterday](#) with ABC's Jonathan Karl, Mr. Earnest continues to peddle the fiction that President Obama did not have ISIS/ISIL in mind when he referred to it in an interview in the *New Yorker* as a "jayvee team." Several weeks ago [I showed why that claim is false](#), and so have many others, [including Glenn Kessler](#), the fact-checker for the *Washington Post*.

It's simply not plausible to believe the White House press secretary is unwittingly mistaken on this matter. By now he has to know what the truth is. He has to know full well that Mr. Obama had ISIS in mind when he referred to it as a "jayvee team." So, by the way, does Mr. Obama, who is [also deceiving Americans about this matter](#).

I understand why the president and his press secretary would rather not admit to having mocked ISIS now that it is the largest, richest, most well armed, and most formidable terrorist group on the planet. But Mr. Obama did, and being duplicitous about the fact that he did isn't going to help anyone. It will, in fact, further erode the president's credibility.

It is bad enough for this administration to be so inept; it's worse for them to be so obviously dishonest as well.

National Journal

[Obama's Pass-the-Buck Presidency](#)

The president has a pattern of deflecting blame and denying responsibility. With military action against ISIS underway, that's a dangerous habit.

by Josh Kraushaar

In attempting to downplay the political damage from a slew of second-term controversies, President Obama has counted on the American people having a very short memory span and a healthy suspension of disbelief. The time-tested strategy for Obama: Claim he's in the dark about his own administration's activities, blame the mess on subordinates, and hope that with the passage of time, all will be forgotten. Harry Truman, the president isn't. He's more likely to pass the buck.

His latest eyebrow-raiser came on 60 Minutes on Sunday, when the president [blamed](#) the failure to anticipate the rise of ISIS on his intelligence community for not informing him of the growing threat. "I think our head of the intelligence community, Jim Clapper, has acknowledged that I think they underestimated what had been taking place in Syria," Obama said. Most early news reports dutifully pinned the blame on the intelligence agencies, with the president escaping any further scrutiny.

But anyone following the news over the past year would have been better informed than the commander in chief. As NBC foreign affairs correspondent Richard Engel [said on MSNBC](#) Monday: "It's surprising that the president said that U.S. intelligence missed this one, because it seems that U.S. intelligence was the only group that missed this one. Everyone knew that Islamic extremists were on the rise in Syria and in Iraq; it was well documented. The extremists were publicizing their activities online—they were bragging about it. Journalists, including us, were interviewing foreign fighters. This was no state secret."

Former Democratic Rep. Joe Sestak of Pennsylvania, the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to Congress, told National Journal that the president was wrong to pass the buck. "As commander in chief, you're accountable. You're the one who is responsible whether the good ship of state is doing it right," said Sestak, pointing to congressional testimony from former Defense

Intelligence Agency chief Michael Flynn in February 2014 regarding the growing threat posed by ISIS. "The administration failed, and the president is the captain of the ship and should assume accountability." Sestak is considering a Pennsylvania Senate bid in 2016, and he would be one of the Democrats' top recruits if he ran.

The president's defenders pointed to a [recent David Ignatius interview](#) with Clapper in The Washington Post, in which the intelligence chief indeed claimed he provided the White House with evidence of ISIS's "prowess and capability." At the same time, he also acknowledged downplaying the enemy's "will to fight" and overestimating the capabilities of the Iraqi forces. It was an odd admission, given the long-demonstrated ruthlessness of the extremists in Iraq and Syria, and the long-reported struggles of Iraq's military. And given the rosy projections of postwar Iraq during the Bush administration, it's unusual to hear intelligence agencies making the same mistake twice. Still, it's clear that Obama wasn't blindsided by the rising threat from Islamic extremists in the Middle East. Outgoing Attorney General Eric Holder [even warned](#) that the emerging threat was "more frightening than anything"—back in July.

The elements of the administration's blame, deny, and wait-it-out communications strategy has been front and center amid all the recent controversies. When the administration badly botched the launch of the health care exchange website, Obama [said](#) he was "not informed directly that the website would not be working the way it was supposed to." This, for his signature achievement in office. Blame was later pinned on Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, who left the administration in April.

When officials at the Internal Revenue Service improperly targeted conservative outside groups for scrutiny, Obama first feigned outrage, saying he had "no patience for" the misconduct. But months later, as the public's anger subsided, Obama [said there](#) "wasn't even a smidgen of corruption" at the agency, and the administration has done little to hold anyone accountable since.

After CNN reported that Veterans Affairs Department offices covered up long wait times at several of its facilities, former Obama press secretary Jay Carney [said](#), "We learned about them through the [news] reports." Long wait times were hardly a secret, with Obama himself [campaigning on VA reform as a candidate](#). To his credit, Obama signed legislation reforming the VA and replaced embattled Secretary Eric Shinseki. But the president himself escaped much of the blame, even though he was clearly familiar with the long-standing problems that the agency faced.

The administration's approach to controversies was best crystallized by former National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor, who deflected criticism about allegations that talking points on the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, were altered for political reasons. "Dude, this was two years ago," [he told Bret Baier of Fox News](#). The remarks were perceived as flippant, but they underscored the success of the administration's public-relations strategy. Buy enough time, and inevitably problems tend to go away—especially in today's attention-deprived environment.

The difference between bureaucratic incompetence and not being fully truthful with the American public is a big one. In the aftermath of scandal, it's easy to understand why the administration, when choosing between portraying the president as disconnected or dissembling, has chosen the former. But throughout his presidency, Obama has acted far from detached. In his second term, he's relied increasingly on loyalists who are less likely to push back against the president's wishes. It's hard to square a president [who reportedly is micromanaging airstrikes in Syria](#) with a president who was unaware of the growing threat from Islamic extremists, which had been increasingly trumpeted on the network news.

"The biggest deficit [in politics now] isn't the debt. It's the trust deficit in our politics," said Sestak. "A year or two ago, when the administration signaled it wasn't going to use the [phrase] 'War on Terror,' that wasn't correct. When they walked away from that, they suggested to the public we've got this in the bag."

Indeed, at a time of American military conflict, truth in advertising is especially important. The president has avoided using the word "war" in describing the conflict with ISIS and new terrorist cells in Syria, but it's hard to view it any other way. Military advisers [have said ground troops will be necessary](#) to prevail, even as the president continually rules out that option (most likely because [it's politically unpopular](#)). Obama ridiculed the strength of the moderate Syrian militias just last month [in an interview](#) with The New York Times' Tom Friedman, but now he's praising their skill after his strategy abruptly changed.

It's understandable that the president was trying to avoid acknowledging that he personally downplayed the threat from ISIS; as a sound bite, it would've been politically damaging. But it is crucially important, going forward, that he's brutally honest with both himself and the American people about the mission. Using campaign-style techniques to deflect criticism from domestic controversies might be expected from any administration. But when national security is at stake, politics should stop at the White House's edge.

American Interest

[Why America Tuned Out the President on 60 Minutes](#)

by Brian C Joondeph

President Obama gave an interview on *60 Minutes* this past weekend. It seems that few people were watching.

Deadline Hollywood, [self-described](#) as "[t]he definitive choice for industry insiders," noted that *60 Minutes* ratings were "off by 69% from last Sunday, when it directly followed the game." Meaning that an NFL game preceding *60 Minutes* is responsible for the show's typically strong ratings. [Specifically](#), *60 Minutes* had 17.9 million viewers on September 21 but only 9.7 million viewers the following week on September 28, when Steve Kroft interviewed the president.

The *LA Times* wrote about overall TV ratings of all shows the night of the Obama interview. In the last paragraph of the article, they finally [note](#), "*60 Minutes* didn't fare as well...down 69% from last week's season premiere." They did not, however, blame the lousy ratings on the absence of a preceding football game. And they did not mention the interviewee, the star attraction for that evening's episode.

Many other publications, as compiled by [The Gateway Pundit](#), also neglected to mention President Obama in connection with the dismal ratings. Those that did blamed the poor viewership on the football game issue.

Last year's NFL season ended with the Super Bowl on February 2. Let's look at *60 Minutes* ratings over the next several months, specifically from February 9 through June 1, 2014, where ratings numbers are available. During this [four-month period](#), there were no football games on Sunday afternoon ahead of the *60 Minutes* broadcast. If the media is correct, the ratings for these shows should all be in the toilet, especially when stacked up against an episode of the president discussing ISIS and terrorism.

Of the fifteen broadcasts of *60 Minutes* during that four-month period, over half of the shows had more viewers than this week's show featuring President Obama discussing terrorism. How can this be? The media is famous for this type of [pretzel logic](#), similar to blaming record cold temperatures on global warming. Instead of postulating the potential unpopularity of the president, they blame the poor viewership on football. In reality, football may be a factor, but as spring viewership demonstrates, it is hardly a significant factor.

The media continues to spin and obfuscate the obvious, treating viewers as idiots for recognizing the difference between reality and fantasy. How ironic that *Once Upon a Time* had [more viewers](#) last Sunday evening than did *60 Minutes* interviewing the president. Seems that fairy tales are less of a fantasy than the president's war against Isis.

Free Beacon

[The Golden Bowl](#)

Hillary Clinton, the Clinton Global Initiative, and our supine media

by Matthew Continetti

[Amy Chozick](#) covers Hillary Clinton for the *New York Times*. She is an enterprising and dedicated reporter, and many of her stories have annoyed the 2016 presidential frontrunner. This week Chozick covered a meeting of the [Clinton Global Initiative](#). It was her turn to be annoyed.

Chozick's [most revealing article about the event](#) had nothing to do with the scheduled agenda, or with the opaque, labyrinthine, and seedy finances of the [Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation](#), or with the tsunami of clichés from the stage about global warming, gender equality, wellness, empowerment, polarization, Mohammed Yunus, sustainable development, globalization, Palm Oil alternatives, uplift, board diversity, education access, green energy, Malala, information technology, organic farming, public-private partnerships, and #YesAllWomen. The article had to do with Chozick's bathroom habits.

Every time she felt the urge, a representative of the Clintons would accompany her to the ladies' room. Every time. And not only would the "friendly 20-something press aide" stroll with Chozick to the entrance of the john. She also "waited outside the stall." As though Chozick were a little girl.

If it was not embarrassing enough to be chaperoned to the water closet by a recent college graduate no doubt beaming with righteousness and an entirely undeserved and illusory sense of self-importance, some earnest and vacant and desperate-to-be-hip Millennial whose affiliation with the Clintons, whose involvement in their various schemes, consists of nothing more than her uniform of white shirt and silk scarf—if this was not on its own an indignity and an insult for a correspondent of the *New York Times*, when Chozick asked for comment on the bathroom police, she received the following response:

Craig Minassian, a spokesman for the initiative, directed me to a press release about American Standard's Flush for Good campaign to improve sanitation for three million people in the developing world. 'Since you are so interested in bathrooms and CGI,' Mr. Minassian said.

Forms of civility, etiquette, and protocol bind Chozick in her dealings with the men and women who work for the subjects of her beat. They do not bind me. And so let me say on behalf of Ms. Chozick, and on behalf of all the other reporters who have been "escorted" to and fro toilets across

America so that not for a moment do they escape the scouring eyes of Bill and Hillary Clinton, that Craig Minassian can stick his big obnoxious head in the toilet and [Flush for Good](#).

I am tired of the double game the Clintons have been playing since last year, when Hillary left the Obama administration and began plotting her 2016 campaign: the passive-aggressive, push-pull tactic of complaining about and condemning supposedly harsh media coverage even as she and her husband and their minions use access and connections to advance their preferred narratives, bullying reporters and outlets who do not conform, and responding to press inquiries with snark and insults and flip and mendacious retorts.

What is more I am tired of the mainstream media's complicity in the manipulation and goaltending, the manner in which reporters for establishment outlets accept the Clintons' absurd regulations and spin, for reasons that are baffling and mysterious to me: whether it is out of ideological or partisan bias, or journalistic self-interest, or the calculation that one day bills will have to be paid, the scribbling will have to end, and jobs in the White House or at [SKDKnickerbocker](#) will have to be obtained.

There was no mass protest over the despotic rules at the Clinton Global Initiative. Chozick's complaint did not become a rallying cry for press freedom. No major institution threatened not to cover next year's meeting. Marty Baron, the executive editor of the *Washington Post*, [tweeted a quote from one of his writers](#), Chris Cillizza, who said the Clintons "[have as dim a view of the political press as any modern politician](#)." Perhaps that view is justified. Look at how easily the Clintons overpower "the political press." Look at the [Anaconda Vise](#) in which they hold the mainstream media.

Did the metro dailies use this week's conference to follow up on [Chozick's reporting from last year](#) on the conflicts of interest and ethical dilemmas and outrageous spending at CGI and the Clinton Foundation? To reexamine [Alec Macgillis's long 2013 profile of Bill Clinton's protégé Doug Band](#), whose consultancy is mixed-up in the foundation's and the initiative's partnerships and sponsorships and [commitments](#)? To conduct even the most mundane inquiry into whether there is anything left to reveal about Hillary Clinton's past?

Let's see. "[At Clintons' 3-Day event, Hillary basks in a candidate's dream setting](#)," read the headline in the *Los Angeles Times*. "[Clinton world braces for big news on baby front](#)," read the headline in the *Wall Street Journal*. "[Clinton wonk party outshines U.N. meeting](#)," read the headline in the *Washington Post*. *USA Today* ran items on the pledge that soda companies made at the event to cut calories by 20 percent in 10 years, on Hillary Clinton's backing of President Obama's Syria policy, and on Bill Clinton's truism that the country has become more tolerant of racial and sexual minorities. The *Times* ran an article on the soda spiel too.

Meanwhile, for the [fourth time this year](#), Alana Goodman of the *Washington Free Beacon* broke news about the former first lady who everyone seems to believe has been thoroughly vetted: In this case, Goodman unveiled Hillary Clinton's [previously unpublished correspondence](#) with radical activist Saul Alinsky. The exchange of letters is a fascinating glimpse of Clinton's relationship with one of the central figures of the New Left, the author of *Rules for Radicals* and the theorist behind community organizing about whom Clinton wrote her college thesis. Goodman's piece is both a scoop and a worthwhile read, on the most basic level to see how Clinton kissed up to Alinsky, calling his work "revelation," and on another level to compare the youthful Hillary against her later incarnations as rapist defense lawyer, cattle futures trader, land speculator, failed health care reformer, victim of infidelity, junior senator, failed presidential candidate, secretary of State, blood clot victim, and motivational speaker.

For the fourth time in 2014, Alana Goodman has scooped the combined resources of the largest media companies in America. And for the fourth time in 2014, the media has reacted bizarrely and schizophrenically to her reporting. Actual, real-life, news-obsessed journalists said, oh, here is an interesting aspect of her majesty's biography that hitherto has been ignored. And liberal hacks wrote blog posts that implicitly recognized our story of being worthy of a response even as they reassured their blinkered and complacent audiences that there was nothing to worry about, no news here, just a bunch of crazy Likudnik nepotists cracking wise in the frat house.

Neither the legitimate journalists nor the partisan bloggers recognize the true import of Goodman's reporting: That the mainstream media is fundamentally lazy and horrible at their jobs. Here you have all of these interesting things about Hillary Clinton just sitting in archives across the country for years, and no one has bothered to look at them because liberals cannot apply the "objectivity" through which they cover Charles Koch and Dick Cheney to people like Tom Steyer and Hillary Clinton. Instead they have to wait until the alternative media forces the issue, whether the issue is Van Jones, or Steyer's coal investments, or Hillary's past, or the IRS scandal, or Benghazi, or the Dave Brat challenge to Eric Cantor. In each instance the mainstream media roll their eyes and mutter under their breath as they report the news in which everyone is interested but them. They impugn and mock and dismiss and marginalize conservative media when what they should be doing is thanking us for doing their work.

I am not entirely without sympathy. Mainstream journalists are under pressures that we are not. They have to pretend for example that David Brock is a serious person. They are implicated in the liberal Democratic project [through family](#) or sympathy or ambition. They have to take angry calls from the White House and congressional Democrats and candidates. One of Alana Goodman's scoops involved [a meeting at the D.C. bureau of the New York Times](#) at which Hillary Clinton's top lieutenants complained about the paper's coverage of their boss, saying it was too intrusive and critical and that Clinton is not a public figure but an expectant grandmother. Leave Hillary alone, she's under a lot of stress right now, she still has to wear those glasses at night, we have long memories, all she wants to do is swim, she hasn't made up her mind about 2016, she's putting the finishing touches on her book, dinner last Saturday was a lot of fun we should do it again sometime, she's really a private person and doesn't like all of this attention, why do you have to be so mean to her, I'm not going to write that recommendation letter for Sidwell Friends, Chelsea's afraid the bad press may affect the baby, yes I'll be at Hilary Rosen's on Friday, we are totally uninteresting and unaffected and blameless and prosaic and apolitical but cross us and we'll cut your f—ing knees off ... Could you have been at that meeting and not laughed?

It will be the unabashedly ideological media that provides the best coverage of the corporatist "centrist" stalking her way back to power. And not just the conservative media: There is plenty of sublimated progressive grumbling at, and critical reporting of, the Hillary juggernaut. Alex Seitz-Wald of MSNBC wrote a fair-minded piece, "[The agony and the ecstasy of the Clintons at CGI](#)," that was a much clearer analysis of the event than any in the major papers. Seitz-Wald went so far as to mention the "elitism problem" and "Wall Street problem" that dog the Clintons, whose idea of combating income inequality is to talk about it while vacationing in a multimillion dollar mansion in the Hamptons, then rub their chins at lavish uplit plenary sessions with Hollywood celebrities and foreign leaders and the head of Goldman Sachs.

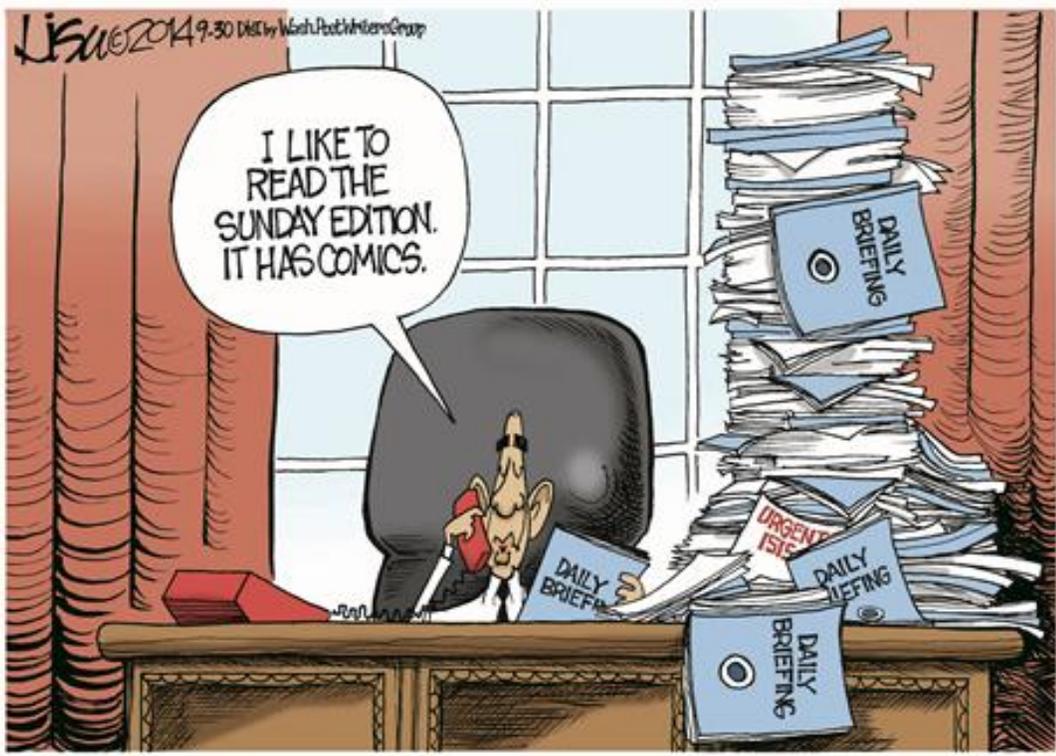
In the coverage of the Clintons this week you saw in microcosm the future of political journalism: aggressive ideological reporting will be on the margins but will score the hits. And the mainstream media will be on the inside, credentialed and "legitimate," their cherubic handlers marching them willingly to marble-tiled hotel bathrooms—hapless prisoners of the golden bowl.



The DUCK STOPS HERE...



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WHITE HOUSE INVADER GOT FARTHER THAN ORIGINALLY THOUGHT