



The Bystander President

Will Obama Ever Take Responsibility For – Let Alone Become Aware Of – His Own Government?

SCANDAL AFTER SCANDAL, OBAMA SINGS THE SAME TUNE: HE IS ALWAYS THE LAST TO KNOW

NSA Spying On Chancellor Of Germany

Obama May Have Gone As Long As “Five Years Without Knowing His Own Spies Were Bugging The Phones Of World Leaders,” Including Merkel. “The White House cut off some monitoring programs after learning of them, including the one tracking Ms. Merkel and some other world leaders, a senior U.S. official said. Other programs have been slated for termination but haven't been phased out completely yet, officials said. The account suggests President Barack Obama went nearly five years without knowing his own spies were bugging the phones of world leaders.” (Siobhan Gorman and Adam Entous, “Obama Unaware As U.S. Spied On World Leaders: Officials,” [The Wall Street Journal](#), 10/28/13)

- **“In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Government Canceled A Cold War-Era Surveillance Agreement Over Reports That NSA Snooping Swept Up Communications In Europe.”** (Deb Riechmann and Kimberly Dozier, “France Is Latest US Ally Angered By NSA Snooping,” [Associated Press](#), 10/22/13)
- **White House Spokesman Jay Carney Said The U.S. Is Not Monitoring Merkel’s Calls.** “But Carney says, quote, ‘The United States is not monitoring and will not monitor the communications of the chancellor.’” (“White House: US Not Monitoring Merkel’s Calls,” [Associated Press](#), 10/23/13)

MSNBC’s Mika Brzezinski Said The Notion That Obama Didn’t Know About The Merkel Affair Is “Embarrassing And Concerning.” BRZEZINSKI: “If the president doesn't know this is happening. That’s sort of embarrassing and concerning.” (MSNBC’s “Morning Joe,” 10/28/13)

Politico’s Maggie Haberman Said That It’s “Alarming” If Obama Did Not Know About The Merkel Affair. HABERMAN: “I think Mica’s point – that this is something – what is worse? That the president knew this or didn’t know this. And the idea that he doesn't know about these things over and over again - I imagine people around him think it's a better explanation domestically than saying he did know. That’s very hard for me to see how it's a positive and how that sounds good to say. If it is true that's alarming.” (MSNBC’s “Morning Joe,” 10/28/13)

The New York Times' Peter Baker Said The Notion That Obama Did Not Know Is "Disturbing."

MSNBC's ALEX WAGNER: "First to talk about the news of the day, which has been a rolling months long news cycle, the Snowden leaks. In your time covering the White House, which has been several years, do you think it's possible the president did not know the NSA was monitoring the personal phone calls of 35 world leaders?" BAKER: "Is it possible, sure, it is possible. That's a disturbing fact in itself. And the President is left in this awkward position where neither of the two main explanations is all that -- you know, all that appealing." (MSNBC's "NOW," 10/28/13)

The Administration's Excuse That Obama Didn't Know "Is Impossible To Take Seriously." "That excuse is impossible to take seriously. Spying on the personal phones of foreign leaders is extremely fraught. As we're seeing, to get caught is to cause major diplomatic problems. Informing the president about this particularly sensitive type of spying would've taken just seconds. "Mr. President, we're monitoring the phones of a few dozen heads of state." If I had to bet, I'd put my money on Obama having known all along. But if he didn't know, it's absurd to insist that it would've been too impractical to tell him." (Conor Friedersdorf, "At Least One U.S. Official Is Lying About NSA Surveillance Of Angela Merkel," [The Atlantic](#), 10/28/13)

Obamacare Website Glitches

Secretary Of Health And Human Services Said That Obama Did Not Know About The Obamacare Website's Glitches And Shortcomings Prior To October 1. CNN's SANJAY GUPTA: "The president did say that he was angry about this. I mean do you know when he first knew that there was a problem?" SEBELIUS: "Well, I think it became clear fairly early on. The first couple of days, that..." GUPTA: "So not before that, though? Not before October 1st?" SEBELIUS: "No, sir." GUPTA: "There was no concern at that point here in the White House or at HHS?" SEBELIUS: "I think that we talked about having -- testing, going forward. And if we had an ideal situation and could have built the product in, you know, a five-year period of time, we probably would have taken five years. But we didn't have five years. And certainly Americans who rely on health coverage didn't have five years for us to wait. We wanted to make sure we made good on this final implementation of the law. And, again, people can sign up. The call center is open for business. We've had 1,100,000 calls. We've had 19 million people visit the Web site, 500,000 accounts created. And people are shopping every day. So people are signing up and there's help in neighborhoods around the country, that people can have a one-on-one visit with a trained navigator and figure out how to sign up. So people are able to sign up." (CNN's "Anderson Cooper 360," 10/22/13)

- **White House Press Secretary Jay Carney Confirmed Secretary Sebelius' Claims That The Administration "Did Not Know" The Significance Of The Glitches Until After The Rollout Began.** JAY CARNEY: "Jim thank you for that question. Secretary Sebelius was referring to what I have said and what the President himself has said, which is that while we knew that there would be some glitches, and actually said publicly that we expected some problems, we did not know until the problems manifested themselves after the launch that they would be as significant as they turned out to be." (White House Press Briefing, Washington, D.C., 10/23/13)

IRS Targeting Conservative Organizations

Obama Said He First Learned About The IRS Scandal From News Reports. OBAMA: "Let me take the IRS situation first. I first learned about it from the same news reports that I think most people learned about this. I think it was on Friday. And this is pretty straightforward. If, in fact, IRS personnel engaged in the kind of practices that have been reported on, and were intentionally targeting conservative groups, then that's outrageous." (President Barack Obama, [President Obama And Prime Minister Cameron Hold A Joint Press Conference](#), Washington,

D.C., 5/13/13)

- **Carney Learned About The IRS Scandal On May 10, The Same Day As Obama.** WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY JAY CARNEY: "It suggests that -- all these questions suggest that somehow the President should have done something in the midst of an independent..." REPORTER: "I didn't suggest that." CARNEY: "Or I. What if I come out and started..." REPORTER: "Because you're the -- you have to cover this podium and deal with these questions for days." CARNEY: "And I think that we -- the response that we had upon the release of that report was very clear. The President spoke firmly about how outraged he was by the behavior. He made clear that we would hold -- that he expected people to be held accountable, and that changes ought to be made." REPORTER: "So what day did you learn?" CARNEY: "The same day the President did." REPORTER: "From news reports?" CARNEY: "Correct." ([White House Press Briefing](#), Washington, D.C. 5/21/13)

Solyndra

When Asked Whether Obama Had Been Briefed About The Solyndra Scandal, Carney Said Obama Had "Probably Read Some News Accounts." REPORTER: "This is a question about Solyndra: Has the President been briefed about what has developed on that—just has he been briefed at all about the questions being raised or just what his administration..." WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY JAY CARNEY: "I think he's probably read some news accounts of it—I'm not aware that he's been briefed. What happened here is an investment did not pan out. there are a variety of reasons for that that have to do with the international marketplace and the price—the cost of solar panels and the Chinese pricing of their competitive products and beyond that it's a story that has to do with—you know—an inquiry by the Hill so there's not a lot to brief him on." (White House Press Secretary Jay Carney, [White House Press Briefing](#), Washington, D.C., 7/15/11)

- **March 2012: Obama Admonished Himself Of Responsibility For Solyndra's Failure.** OBAMA: "We are doing the all-the-above strategy right. Obviously we wish Solyndra hadn't gone bankrupt. Part of the reason they did was because the Chinese were subsidizing their solar industry and flooding the market in ways that Solyndra couldn't compete. But understand, this was not our program per say. Congress, Democrats and Republicans, put together a loan guarantee program because they understood historically that when you get new industries, it's easy to raise money for startups, but if you want to take them to scale often times there's a lot of risk involved, and what the loan guarantee program was designed to do was to help startup companies get to scale. And the understanding is, is that some companies are not going to succeed, some companies will do very well, but the portfolio as a whole ends up supporting the kind of innovation that helps make America successful in this innovative, 21st century economy. Do I wish that Solyndra had gone bankrupt? Absolutely not. And obviously it's heartbreaking that it happened for the workers who were there." (American Public Media, [Interview With President Obama](#), 3/22/12)
- **Obama Said He Did Not Regret Sinking \$535 Million Taxpayer Dollars In Solyndra.** GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: "Your White House has faced a lot of questions on Solyndra-a solar panel company you paid a visit to back in 2010, you really held it up then as a model for jobs and clean energy. Do you regret that?" OBAMA: "No I don't because if you look at the overall portfolio of loan guarantees that have been provided, overall it's doing well. And what we've always understood is that not every single business is going to succeed in clean energy, but if we want to compete with China, which is pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into this space. If we want to compete with other countries that are heavily subsidizing the industries of the future, we got to make sure that our guys, here in the United States of America at least have a shot. Now there are

going to be some failures.” (ABC’s [“News Makers,”](#) 10/3/11)

DOJ’s Subpoenas Of News Organizations

Obama First Learned About The Department Of Justice’s Subpoenas For *The Associated Press* From “News Reports.” Q: “When did the President find out about the Department of Justice’s subpoenas for the Associated Press?” CARNEY: “Yesterday. Let me just be clear. We don’t have any independent knowledge of that. He found out about the news reports yesterday on the road.” ([White House Press Briefing,](#) 5/14/13)

OBAMA’S EVASIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY MAKE HIS EARLIER CALLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY RING HOLLOW

February 2009: Obama Said That Part Of His “New Course” For Washington Was “Making Sure That When I Screw Up That I’m Taking Responsibility For It.” OBAMA: “It’s not going to be perfect. There are going to be bumps and fits and starts on this thing. But as long as I stay focused on them and putting them back to work, making sure that they have health insurance, making sure their kids can afford college, cleaning up attitudes around here, including making sure that when I screw up that I’m taking responsibility for it. I think that people will feel that three or four or five years down the road that you know we set a new course.” (President Barack Obama, [Interview With Katie Couric Of CBS News,](#) 2/3/09)

February 2009: Obama Said “I Expect To Be Judged By Results. And There’s No -- I’m Not Going To Make Any Excuses.” OBAMA: “I expect to be judged by results. And there’s no -- I’m not going to make any excuses. If stuff hasn’t worked and people don’t feel like I’ve led the country in the right direction, then you’ll have a new President.” (President Obama, [Remarks At Fort Myers Town Hall,](#) Fort Myers, FL, 2/10/09)

June 2011: Biden Said “There Is Nothing Like Accountability, Man.” VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: ““There’s nothing like accountability, man. It sure focuses your attention. My father used to say accountability works really well especially when you’re in the bull’s-eye. Let me tell you, we’re all in the bull’s-eye.”” (Vice President Joe Biden, [Remarks On Making Government More Accountable,](#) Washington, D.C., 6/13/11)

July 2012: Obama: “As President Of The United States, It’s Pretty Clear To Me That I’m Responsible For Folks Who Are Working In The Federal Government And You Know, Harry Truman Said The Buck Stops With You.” OBAMA: “Well, here’s what I know, we were just talking about responsibility and as president of the United States, it’s pretty clear to me that I’m responsible for folks who are working in the federal government and you know, Harry Truman said the buck stops with you.” (“President Obama Says Romney Should Answer Bain Capital Questions,” [WILA,](#) 7/13/12)

- **Obama: “One Of The Things You Learn Is, You Are Ultimately Responsible For The Conduct Of Your Operations...”** OBAMA: “Ultimately Mr. Romney, I think, is going to have to answer those questions, because if he aspires to being president one of the things you learn is, you are ultimately responsible for the conduct of your operations, but again that’s probably a question that he’s going to have to answer and I think that’s a legitimate part of the campaign.” (“President Obama Says Romney Should Answer Bain Capital Questions,” [WILA,](#) 7/13/12)