



Who's Running This Ship?

Obama's Second Term Is Suffering From An Accountability Deficit

In 2009, President 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)

OBAMA HAS AVOIDED TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS SECOND TERM SCANDALS

Former Senior Obama Official: It's Like Obama Officials "Don't Know What They're Here To Do." "It feel like they don't know what they're here to do," a former senior Obama administration official said. "When there's no narrative, stuff like this consumes you." (Mike Allen and Jim VandeHei, "D.C. Turns On Obama," [Politico](#), 5/14/13)

"Obama's Aloof Mien And Holier-Than-Thou Rhetoric Have Left Him With Little Reservoir Of Good Will, Even Among Democrats." "Obama's aloof mien and holier-than-thou rhetoric have left him with little reservoir of good will, even among Democrats. And the press, after years of being accused of being soft on Obama while being berated by West Wing aides on matters big and small, now has every incentive to be as ruthless as can be." (Mike Allen and Jim VandeHei, "D.C. Turns On Obama," [Politico](#), 5/14/13)

- **"This White House's Instinctive Petulance, Arrogance And Defensiveness Have All Worked Together To Isolate Obama At A Time When He Most Needs A Support System."** (Mike Allen and Jim VandeHei, "D.C. Turns On Obama," [Politico](#), 5/14/13)

The Washington Post's Dana Milbank: "President Passerby Needs Urgently To Become A Participant His Presidency." "President Passerby needs urgently to become a participant in his presidency. Late Monday came the breathtaking news of a full-frontal assault on the First Amendment by his administration: word that the Justice Department had gone on a fishing expedition through months of phone records of Associated Press reporters. And yet President Obama reacted much as he did to the equally astonishing revelation on Friday that the IRS had targeted conservative groups based on their ideology: He responded as though he were just some bloke on a bar stool, getting his information from the evening news. In the phone-snooping case, Obama didn't even stir from his stool. Instead, he had his press secretary, former Time magazine journalist Jay Carney, go before an incensed press corps and

explain why the president will not be involving himself in his Justice Department's trampling of press freedoms. 'Other than press reports, we have no knowledge of any attempt by the Justice Department to seek phone records of the Associated Press,' Carney announced. The president 'found out about the news reports yesterday on the road,' he added." (Dana Milbank, Op-Ed, "Obama, The Uninterested President," [The Washington Post](#), 5/14/13)

Obama "Is Trying To Rewrite The Lines Of Accountability" On The IRS Scandal

Former Clinton Adviser Vernon Jordan: On The IRS Scandal, Obama "Needs To Fire Somebody. He Needs Action, Not Conversation." "Vernon Jordan, a close adviser to President Bill Clinton through his darkest days, told us: 'It's never all right if you're the president. There is no smooth sailing. So now he has the turbulence, and this is the ultimate test of his leadership.' Jordan says Obama needs to do something dramatic on the IRS, and quick: 'He needs to fire somebody. He needs action, not conversation.'" (Mike Allen and Jim VandeHei, "D.C. Turns On Obama," [Politico](#), 5/14/13)

Wall Street Journal Editorial: On The IRS Scandal, "Obama Is Trying To Rewrite The Lines Of Accountability To Spare Himself." "Congress gave the President the power to hire and fire the IRS chief precisely to ensure that the tax authority is politically accountable. By claiming the IRS is 'independent,' Mr. Obama is trying to rewrite the lines of accountability to spare himself, even as he demands for public soundbite purposes that any culprits be held 'fully accountable.' In any case it's hardly reassuring if the politicized tax enforcement was done by career bureaucrats. This would mean such abuses are embedded in IRS enforcement culture." (Editorial, "The 'Independent' Revenue Service," [Wall Street Journal](#), 5/14/13)

- **With The IRS Scandal, "It Is Easier To Make A Case That A Mindset Of Inattention To Governing Detail And Excessive Attention To Politics Was At Work..."** "But in the current atmosphere of multi-ring uproars, it is easier to make a case that a mindset of inattention to governing detail and excessive attention to politics was at work in the State Department on Benghazi, and the IRS on investigation of tea party groups, even if Obama isn't shown to be directly involved." (Alexander Burns and John F. Harris, "Obama's Dangerous New Narrative," [Politico](#), 3/15/13)

National Journal's Ron Fournier Says He Doesn't Know Whether Obama's Late Realization Of The IRS Scandal Is Due To His Insulation Or Simply "PR Incompetence." MSNBC's CHRIS MATTHEWS: "Now it's pretty clear the White House knew about this particular problem two weeks ago." MSNBC's CHUCK TODD: "Two, three weeks ago." MATTHEWS: "Why didn't the Counsel's office tell the president? Why did he have to wait to read the reports on Friday?" TODD: "That is not a question they've answered in any terms." MATTHEWS: "Did anybody ask Carney why didn't the White House Counsel tell the president what was going on here?" TODD: "Yes. They said that not everything gets told to the president." MATTHEWS: "What's the thinking behind that?" TODD: "If I was Denis McDonough I would be asking that question." MATTHEWS: "Is there some insulation around the president, see no evil, hear no evil?" NATIONAL JOURNAL'S RON FOURNIER: "I don't know if that's it or it is just P.R. incompetence. That question should have been answered." MATTHEWS: "You find out -- I don't care what numb skull we're talking about. Not even a political pro. You know that the IRS is checking on people's political, going particularly after right wing groups and you know the president has always been suspected of being a liberal and out to get those people. Then you find out there's evidence that his IRS is doing that. Don't you tell him, boss, we got a problem here." (MSNBC's [Hardball](#), 5/14/13)

Obama Has "Failed To Offer A Credible Justification" For His Justice Department's Decision To Spy On The Associated Press

The New York Times Editorial: The Obama Administration Has “Failed To Offer A Credible Justification For Secretly Combing Through The Phone Records.” “The Obama administration, which has a chilling zeal for investigating leaks and prosecuting leakers, has failed to offer a credible justification for secretly combing through the phone records of reporters and editors at The Associated Press in what looks like a fishing expedition for sources and an effort to frighten off whistle-blowers.” (Editorial, “Spying On The Associated Press,” [The New York Times](#), 5/14/13)

USA Today Editorial: The Obama “Administration Needs Some Hard Thinking About Abuse Of Power.” “As for the IRS revelation, Attorney General Eric Holder has ordered a criminal investigation to determine whether anyone at the agency broke the law. That's a start. But the Justice Department's decision-making in the AP case doesn't inspire confidence in the result. This administration needs some hard thinking about abuse of power.” (Editorial, “AP Phone Subpoenas Cross A Line,” [USA Today](#), 5/14/13)

- **USA Today Editorial: “True, The Government Has A Responsibility To Protect National Security, But Not Without Limit, And The AP Case Is An Escalation.”** (Editorial, “AP Phone Subpoenas Cross A Line,” [USA Today](#), 5/14/13)

FLASHBACK: OBAMA WAS SUPPOSED TO BE IN “COMPLETE CONTROL” OF HIS WHITE HOUSE

“Obama Has Begun His Second Term By Consolidating His Personal Control Of The White House, Democrats In And Outside The Administration Say.” “President Barack Obama has begun his second term by consolidating his personal control of the White House, Democrats in and outside the administration say, reflecting a shift from his less centralized first term. The shift has become clear in the new style of management under Obama's new chief of staff, Denis McDonough, who — unlike his predecessors — acts more as Obama's enforcer than as a principal in his own right.” (Evan McMorris-Santoro and Ben Smith, “Obama Takes Control In The Second Term,” [BuzzFeed](#), 4/8/13)

- **Former Obama Aide Jonathan Prince: “Obama ‘Is In Complete Control Of The White House.’”** “Obama ‘is in complete control of the White House,’ said Jonathan Prince, a Democratic political consultant who was a foreign policy aide in Obama's first term. And the coming years will reveal whether the president's command of the details and sense of himself as the smartest man in the room will produce a newly effective presidency — or a worrisome centralization.” (Evan McMorris-Santoro and Ben Smith, “Obama Takes Control In The Second Term,” [BuzzFeed](#), 4/8/13)