

IF AND WHEN DEMOCRATS KEEP THE HOUSE, CONYERS SHOULD REMIND HOLDER THE IMPORT OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

I realize the odds of Democrats keeping the House are not all that great. But I also know that the DCCC is far more competent than the RNCC; DCCC has managed to win just about every challenging election of late.

So let's just say Democrats keep the House and with it John Conyers his gavel. I really hope he'll make Eric Holder regret not only this inappropriate comment to Lamar Smith (I don't care whether Democrats or Republicans are in charge, the Committees are there to exercise oversight, not "be nice" to the agencies they cover), but also the unnecessary disloyalty.

Maybe Conyers can start by asking Holder to either provide a more credible explanation for why Pittsburgh's FBI office was lying about taking a picture at a peace rally with no premise to do so than the FBI provided to Inspector General Glenn Fine (more on this IG Report in a bit).

FBI officials, including the Pittsburgh office's top lawyer, engaged in distinctly COINTELPRO-style tactics after the American Civil Liberties Union sued for the release of documents relating to the surveillance. Boiled down to their essence, those tactics involved officials generating post-dated "routing slips" and other paper to create a terrorism threat that didn't exist.

Or as the inspector general put it, the FBI's elaborate, "after-the-fact reconstruction" of the Pittsburgh events, designed to fabricate a counter-terrorism rationale for the rookie's surveillance mission, "was not corroborated by any witnesses or contemporaneous documents."

It was on the basis of their fabrication, moreover, that FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III gave "inaccurate and misleading" testimony to Congress, the IG said.

The IG's recounting of the Pittsburgh events is lengthy and meticulous.

The FBI, however, continues to deny that bureau officials engaged in an elaborate and deliberate scheme to deceive investigators, Congress and the public about what was, in retrospect, one rookie agent's minor, misdirected surveillance of the Pittsburgh antiwar demonstration.

"Nobody," the FBI says, "had a motive to provide an intentionally misleading account of it."

It seems the only people who are given carte blanche to lie and obstruct justice are those trying to evade Congressional oversight, and the people who rely on that seeming carte blanche report up through Holder. That's a management failure and a failure of the rule of law.

Would that the Attorney General cared more about that rule of law than chumming up to the opposition party.