

MORE ON THE TROOPERGATE COVER- UP

Here's how Alaska State Representative Les Gara described the latest developments in the TrooperGate cover-up—in which five Republicans sued to stop the bi-partisan legislative investigation and the Attorney General flip-flopped over whether Palin's staffers have to respond to legislative subpoenas.

It's silly season up here in the far north, but this week's moves are aimed at one thing: John McCain's effort to find cover for being disingenuous. See, before Governor Palin's nomination for the Republican VP spot, she did the honest thing. She admitted the evidence — of roughly 20 contacts between her staff and husband with Public Safety officials, seeking the firing of Governor Palin's former brother-in-law — might lead a reasonable person to the conclusion that she misused her office to fire a state employee. So when Alaska's Republican-led Legislature called for an investigation, she did the honorable thing and said she and her staff would comply. She denies any wrongdoing.

Things changed on August 29 when Governor Palin was added to the McCain ticket. Since then his handlers have told her she can't testify. They don't want the evidence in this case to come out. They don't want her to testify under oath. They don't want other witnesses to testify under oath.

So they have engaged in daily maneuvers to attack, as disloyal to the McCain campaign, anyone who wants the investigation to move forward. They've

now attacked two well respected prosecutors, and perhaps the state's most highly regarded law enforcement official – the Public Safety Commissioner she hired, and then fired, Walt Monegan.

Every day this week McCain operatives have sung the same tune. **Today a guy with an East Coast accent, who knows nothing about Alaska, stood in front of a McCain-Palin banner to lead the attacks against people he doesn't know.** At press conferences on Monday and Tuesday campaign staffer Megan Stapleton spit vitriol to repeat her argument that this investigation is really a "Democratic" attack on Governor Palin.

See, that's easier than just saying their VP has reneged on her promise to testify. It's easier than just saying they don't want anyone testifying before the November election. It's easier than admitting they are stonewalling a legislative investigation. [my emphasis]

Gara goes on to explain the little details about the Republican majority in the Alaska legislature that some of us outsiders—particularly in the McCain campaign—seem to be missing. Which only amplifies the point—a bunch of outsiders have swooped into Alaska and started telling Alaskans lies about their own state politics.

Now, according to this picture, that "guy with an East Coast accent" is Ed O'Callaghan, the big gun lawyer the McPalin campaign brought in to ratchet up the cover-up. O'Callaghan was introduced to us (in this context, at least) by Michael Isikoff.

A former top Justice Department prosecutor now working for John McCain's presidential campaign has been helping to direct an aggressive legal strategy

aimed at shutting down a pre-election ethics investigation into Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin.

The growing role of Edward O'Callaghan, who until six weeks ago served as co-chief of the terrorism and national security unit of the U.S. attorney's office in New York, illustrates just how seriously the McCain campaign is taking the so-called "troopergate" inquiry into Palin's firing last summer of Walt Monegan, Alaska's Public Safety Commissioner.

O'Callaghan emerged publicly for the first time this week when he told reporters at a McCain campaign press conference, in Anchorage, that Palin is "unlikely to cooperate" with an Alaskan legislative inquiry into Monegan's firing because it had been "tainted" by politics. That new stand appeared to directly contradict a previous vow, expressed by her official gubernatorial spokesman on July 28, that Palin "will fully cooperate" with an investigation into the matter.

But O'Callaghan (who resigned from the U.S. attorney's office at the end of July to join the McCain campaign) is doing more than just public relations when it comes to "troopergate." He told NEWSWEEK that he and another McCain campaign lawyer (whom he declined to identify) are serving as legal "consultants" to Thomas Van Flein, the Anchorage lawyer who at state expense is representing Palin and her office in the inquiry.

As Isikoff explains later in his article, O'Callaghan was recently overseeing the Oil to Food prosecutions—notably the prosecution of Oscar Wyatt. He was also in charge of the really bizarre prosecution of Susan Lindauer, who was

indicted as a foreign agent after she served as a go-between between Iraq and her cousin, Andy Card, in an attempt to end sanctions against Iraq. After an extended period in which Lindauer was in a federal facility to determine whether she was competent to stand trial, she had a June hearing in which several people testified she had ties to the CIA; a subsequent hearing with her own doctor to testify to her competence to stand trial has been postponed, most recently apparently so a new federal prosecutor can take over for O'Callaghan. Before that he worked on Gambino family prosecutions.

Now, I don't know what the McCain campaign promised O'Callaghan to convince him to walk off the job in July and then, a month later, head off to Alaska to baby-sit the new VP nominee—besides that I suspect he wants to be the next Associate White House Counsel or something like that. But in a matter of weeks he went from one of the lead prosecutors in NYC's terrorism prosecution unit to trying to play a fast one with the Alaska legislature to help Sarah Palin cover-up her actions in TrooperGate.

But it does say something about how worried they are about this.