

REPUBLICANS TRASHING LAW ENFORCEMENT BECAUSE IT POLLS WELL

The best explanation for why, after having been briefed that underwear bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was in FBI custody (and therefore, anyone who watches TV would know, mirandized), Republicans more recently started attacking the Obama Administration for having mirandized Abdulmutallab is this:

Republicans discovered the renewed power of terrorism in last month's special Senate election in Massachusetts. Neil Newhouse, the pollster for the Republican victor, Scott Brown, said voters responded to the way Mr. Brown framed the issue, supporting him 63 percent to 26 percent when told he favored charging suspected terrorists as enemy combatants in a military tribunal while his Democratic opponent would give them constitutional rights and a civilian trial.

"This moved voters more than the health care issue did," Mr. Newhouse said. "The terrorism stuff resonated, and it wasn't just from the advertising we did."

In fact, Mitch McConnell all but admitted that he was hitting the Administration on civilian court issues because of Scott Brown's election in response to a question he was asked on February 3.

"If this approach of putting these people in U.S. courts doesn't sell in Massachusetts, I don't know where it sells," he told a questioner.

He added: "You can campaign on these issues anywhere in America."

That is, Republicans are attacking law enforcement—even as they have succeeded in getting Abdulmutallab’s cooperation quicker than it took the torturers to get false information out of KSM—because it polls well, because Scott Brown won on a pro-waterboarding platform.

Here’s the timeline:

December 25, 2009: Abdulmutallab attempts to bomb plane; after refusing to talk, FBI reads Miranda warning; John Brennan briefs Republican leadership that Abdulmutallab in FBI custody; FBI tells intelligence partners it will charge Abdulmutallab criminally, to no objections

December 26, 2009: FBI again tells intelligence partners it will charge Abdulmutallab criminally, to no objections

January 1, 2010: Two FBI agents fly to Nigeria to seek help from Abdulmutallab’s family

January 4, 2010: Scott Brown embraces waterboarding, advocates trying Abdulmutallab in military commission

January 5, 2010: Administration considers, but rejects, possibility of treating Abdulmutallab as enemy combatant

January 7, 2010: Obama Administration releases report of what went wrong on terror attack

January 8-10, 2010: 57% surveyed prefer military commission to civilian trial

January 17, 2010: Two Abdulmutallab family members fly back to Detroit to convince him to cooperate

January 19, 2010: Scott Brown wins special election

January 20, 2010: Joe Lieberman and Susan Collins hold hearing on Christmas bombing; Collins complains about information sharing, not Miranda warning; Blair says not consulted before Miranda read, says new interrogation team should have made decision though it is not yet functional

Several days after his family arrives:
Abdulmutallab begins to cooperate

January 25, 2010: Lieberman and Collins write
letter attacking FBI for giving Miranda warning

January 27, 2010: Mitch McConnell and others
write Holder complaining about Miranda warning

January 30, 2010: Susan Collins attacks Obama
for Miranda warning in weekly radio address

February 2, 2010: Mueller tells SSCI
Abdulmutallab is cooperating

February 3, 2010: Holder responds to Republican
critics; Mitch McConnell attacks "law
enforcement" approach and later admits it works
in campaigns, mentioning Brown's victory

February 7, 2010: John Brennan reveals that
Republican leaders briefed on FBI custody for
Abdulmutallab, made no objections

February 9, 2010: John Brennan writes op-ed, "We
need no lectures."