

JONAH GOLDBERG COMPLAINS THAT MEDIA TREATS BOYS WHO CRY WOLF LIKE BOYS WHO CRY WOLF

Welcome to November. As DDay joked on Twitter last night, we've officially moved out of October Surprise month.

I guess Jonah Goldberg was thinking of the same timing when he wrote a column—posted at midnight on October 31—complaining that the press had not taken the Benghazi attack more seriously.

If you want to understand why conservatives have lost faith in the so-called mainstream media, you need to ponder the question: Where is the Benghazi feeding frenzy?

[snip]

Last week, Fox News correspondent Jennifer Griffin reported that sources on the ground in Libya say they pleaded for support during the attack on the Benghazi consulate that led to the deaths of four Americans, including U.S. ambassador Christopher Stevens. They were allegedly told twice to “stand down.” Worse, there are suggestions that there were significant military resources available to counterattack, but requests for help were denied.

If this is true, the White House's concerted effort to blame the attack on a video crumbles, as do several other fraudulent claims. Yet, last Friday, the president boasted that “the minute I found out what was happening” in Benghazi, he ordered that everything possible be done to protect our

personnel. That is either untrue, or he's being disobeyed on grave matters.

This isn't an "October surprise" foisted on the media by opposition research; it's news.

There are just a couple problems with Jonah's complaint, though. There's his suggestion that reporting on Richard Mourdock's belief that women should bear the children of their rapists is "ridiculous." There's his silence about the real October Surprises of history, the unpatriotic ones crafted by Republicans: Nixon's negotiation with the Vietnamese and reported efforts to hold the Iranian hostages to hurt Jimmy Carter (and Jonah dismisses the seriousness of the Swift Boat attack on John Kerry).

But mostly there's the evidence that the attacks on Obama's response to Benghazi were explicitly intended to serve as an October Surprise. In fact, according to Craig Unger's unrebutted report dating to the first day of October, Republicans explicitly called this line of attack an October Surprise.

According to a highly reliable source, as Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama prepare for the first presidential debate Wednesday night, top Republican operatives are primed to unleash a new two-pronged offensive that will attack Obama as weak on national security, and will be based, in part, on new intelligence information regarding the attacks in Libya that killed U.S. ambassador Chris Stevens on September 11.

The source, who has first-hand knowledge of private, high-level conversations in the Romney camp that took place in Washington, DC last week, said that at various times the GOP strategists referred to their new operation as the

Jimmy Carter Strategy or the October Surprise.

He added that they planned to release what they hoped would be “a bombshell” that would make Libya and Obama’s foreign policy a major issue in the campaign. “My understanding is that they have come up with evidence that the Obama administration had positive intelligence that there was going to be a terrorist attack on the intelligence.”

The day after Unger’s report, Darrell Issa—not, as would be entirely appropriate, Mike Rogers—started a loud and clumsy attack that, while it correctly exposed State’s misjudgment about security for the mission in Benghazi, completely ignored underlying (and equally serious) problems with the CIA’s response. Republicans repeatedly leaked documents claiming they said one thing when in fact they said something completely different (though what they said was still serious).

In other words, a Republican source said Republicans were planning an October Surprise, and Republicans spent the entire month of October very obviously acting to turn Benghazi into one, all the while ignoring the really serious issues raised by Benghazi that should be discussed.

I think Jonah’s most pissed about this, a story about a classified August 16 cable reporting on an emergency meeting about threats to the Benghazi mission, predicting that the mission could not withstand a coordinated attack. The story reads very much like it is the intended bombshell Unger’s source reported, the warning Obama didn’t heed, held on ice for the entire month of October like a precious prize.

The story is news. And we will return to it, presumably, next Wednesday and in the weeks thereafter, as the serious people begin to take over this investigation from buffoons like Issa

and Romney surrogate Jason Chaffetz.

But for some reason it happened to get leaked the weekend before the election. In most years, such a remarkably timed release would fit right into October Surprise campaign, dominating the weekend shows just before the election (the GOP apparently haven't updated their October Surprise plans since early voting became so important).

Except Mother Nature had an October Surprise of her own. And unless stories start breaking about seniors stuck in powerless skyscrapers with no food, water, or means to get to street level to get those things (I think this is still a distinct possibility), the pre-election weekend will be dominated by pictures of President Obama looking very presidential in a crisis and pictures of Mitt looking increasingly desperate and weak.

The Republicans, it seems, had their October Surprise preempted by a real October Surprise.

That's the thing about surprises, I guess. Sometimes they actually are surprises and not well-managed opposition campaigns.