

AS ONE OF FIRST ACTS AS SPEAKER, PAUL RYAN RETAINS DEVIN NUNES ON HPSCI

A few weeks ago, I noted that the new Speaker – officially yesterday, Paul Ryan – had an opportunity to name Chairmen of Select committees, most notably Devin Nunes on the House Intelligence Chair. I argued the new Speaker should do just that, with the aim of having more rigorous oversight of the nation's Intelligence Community.

[I]t seems fair to suggest that Nunes should go too. While Nunes was actually better on Benghazi than his predecessor (raising questions about the CIA's involvement in gun-running), he has otherwise been a typical rubber stamp for the intelligence community, rushing to pass info-sharing with Department of Energy even while commenting on their shitty security practices, and pitching partisan briefings to give the IC one more opportunity to explain why the phone dragnet was more useful than all the independent reviews say it was. The Intelligence Community has lost credibility since 9/11, and having a series of rubber stamp oversight Chairs (excepting Silvestre Reyes, who was actually reasonably good) has only exacerbated that credibility problem. So why not call for the appointment of someone like former state judge Ted Poe, who has experience with intelligence related issues on both the Judiciary and Foreign Relations Committees, but who has also been a staunch defender of the Constitution.

[snip]

[N]o place in Congress needs to be reformed more than our intelligence oversight. And while picking a more independent Chair won't revamp the legal structure of intelligence oversight, it might initiate a process of bringing more rigorous oversight to our nation's intelligence agencies.

Apparently, Speaker Ryan disagrees. He issued this statement today (I guess Ryan is just a few years too young to remember that the world actually used to be a more dangerous place, but whatev).

The world has gotten only more dangerous, and serious times call for serious leaders. That's why I've asked Rep. Devin Nunes to stay on as chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. Devin and Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry have done great work holding the administration accountable for its national-security failures, and I want them to continue their strong partnership. Though Congressman Nunes has been a terrific ally and staunch defender of conservative principles on the Ways and Means Committee, I am grateful for his continued leadership of the Intelligence Committee.

It's unclear whether this was an affirmative choice, or a bid to make the contest to replace Ryan as Chair of Ways and Means easier.

In accepting Ryan's request, however, Nunes – apparently also too young to remember the Cold War in his assessment of global threats – pointed to cybersecurity (AKA domestic Internet spying) legislation as one of his priorities.

I am honored to have been asked by the new Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, to continue serving as Chairman of the

House Intelligence Committee. Our nation faces unprecedented global threats ranging from the growing risk of deadly terrorism to debilitating cyber-attacks, and the Intelligence Community's response to these threats requires diligent Congressional oversight. After careful reflection and in light of the Speaker's wish for me to continue this important role, I have decided to remain Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. As we move forward under the leadership of Speaker Ryan, it will be important to complete the good work we have done on an intelligence authorization bill and to get cybersecurity legislation passed to the President's desk.

Ah well. When Ryan runs for President I guess we can point to this as an indication of his desire to let the intelligence community continue to run roughshod.

Congratulations to James Clapper and the rest of the lot. You still run the joint!