

CDC SHOOTING 2.0 - IT'S COMING FROM INSIDE THE HOUSE



Centers For Disease Control and Prevention

I feel like I'm watching a bad sequel to a scary movie from 20 years ago.

Back in 2004, Dick Cheney and the Bush White House were desperate to get the Department of Justice to sign off on an extension to an NSA warrantless wiretapping program. Complicating matters was the fact that AG Ashcroft was in the ICU at George Washington University Hospital and had designated Deputy AG Jim Comey to be the acting AG while he was incapacitated.

And make no mistake: Ashcroft **was** incapacitated. In broad strokes, no one just hangs out in an ICU – you're there because you are in bad shape and need constant observation and often constant medications/treatments. Most conversations that happen in an ICU are between the staff and the family, and less so with the patient, because the patient is less-than-competent because of their condition, their medications, or both.

Comey was known by the WH to be opposed to extending this program, so the WH tried an end round to induce Ashcroft to sign the relevant documents without Comey's knowledge. Before

Alberto Gonzales (WH Counsel) and Andy Card (WH Chief of Staff) could get to the hospital, word reached Comey of what was up. Bart Gellman described it like this in his book *Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency* as excerpted in the WaPo:

In early evening, the phone rang at the makeshift FBI command center at George Washington University Medical Center, where Ashcroft remained in intensive care. According to two officials who saw the FBI logs, the president was on the line. Bush told the ailing Cabinet chief to expect a visit from Gonzales and White House Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card Jr....

Alerted by Ashcroft's chief of staff, Comey, Goldsmith and FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III raced toward the hospital, abandoning double-parked vehicles and running up a stairwell as fast as their legs could pump.

Comey reached Ashcroft's bedside first. Goldsmith and his colleague Patrick F. Philbin were close behind. Now came Card and Gonzales, holding an envelope. If Comey would not sign the papers, maybe Ashcroft would....

Unexpectedly, Ashcroft roused himself. Previous accounts have said he backed his deputy. He did far more than that. Ashcroft told the president's men he never should have certified the program in the first place.

When everyone left the hospital, Comey, Mueller, and other DOJ folks began writing letters of resignation. Again, from Gellman:

All hell was breaking loose at Justice. Lawyers streamed back from the suburbs, converging on the fourth-floor conference room. Most of them were not cleared to hear the details, but a decision began to coalesce: If Comey

quit, none of them were staying.

At the FBI, they called Mueller “Bobby Three Sticks,” playfully tweaking the Roman numerals in his fancy Philadelphia name. Late that evening, word began to spread. It wasn’t only Comey. Bobby Three Sticks was getting ready to turn in his badge.

Justice had filled its top ranks with political loyalists. They hoped to see Bush reelected. Had anyone explained to the president what was at stake?

Whelan pulled out his BlackBerry. He fired off a message to White House staff secretary Brett Kavanaugh, a friend whose position gave him direct access to Bush.

“I knew zilch about what the matter was, but I did know that lots of senior DOJ folks were on the verge of resigning,” Whelan said in an e-mail, declining to discuss the subject further. “I thought it important to make sure that the president was aware of that situation so that he could factor it in as he saw fit.”

Kavanaugh had no more idea than Whelan, but he passed word to Card.

The timing was opportune. Just about then, around 11 p.m., Comey responded to an angry summons from the president’s chief of staff. Whatever Card was planning to say, he had calmed down suddenly.

When faced with mass resignations from high-ranking DOJ officials who stubbornly refused to adjust their principles with respect to the law to fit the preferred WH policy, the WH backed down. Marcy has a big timeline (of course!) of all the stuff around the warrantless wiretapping program memos if you want to dig into the weeds

of yester-year.

But I'll be damned if what's coming out of the CDC right now doesn't sound **exactly** like what happened 20 years ago.

Susan Monarez, the CDC director, refuses to change her mind, not on a matter of policy but on a principle of adherence to science. After some back and forth, including various lawyers, it appears the WH has terminated her and named RFK's deputy as the acting CDC Director. Meanwhile, a raft of Monarez's very senior deputies submitted their resignations in order to stand with her. Hundreds of other CDC staffers are rallying outside to support their bosses.

This horror movie is magnitudes worse than the Hospital Confrontation of the Bush era, because if RFK Jr. and Trump prevail in this, CDC policies will change in ways that will cost people's lives. Medical science will take a back seat to political expediency and pseudo-scientific quackery. What once was the organization that set the worldwide standard for a national Public Health agency is fast becoming not a joke but an actual danger to public health. The end result will be deaths – unnecessary yet inevitable deaths – and these CDC officials who resigned want no part of it.

RFK Jr. is no Dick Cheney, and Trump is no George W. Bush. Cheney and Bush recognized when they were outflanked, and so backed up and tried to find another way to do what they wanted to do. RFK Jr. and Trump, on the other hand, are the guys who charge loudly into the doctor's office and won't leave until they get an antibiotic to deal with a viral infection. Antibiotics do **not** work on a virus, no matter how loudly you shout, how many quacks you cite, or what your job title is.

A gunman shot up the CDC headquarters a few weeks ago from outside the gates and guards. But like any good horror movie, Trump and RFK Jr. are shooting it up from inside the house.

God help us all.