

WHY IS DARRELL ISSA DOING MIKE ROGERS' JOB?

In his latest of a series of posts on the Benghazi strike, Eli Lake reveals that Darrell Issa and Jason Chaffetz have written a letter to Hillary Clinton suggesting State ignored intelligence about terrorists in Benghazi.

In the five months leading up to this year's 9/11 anniversary, there were two bombings on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi and increasing threats to and attacks on the Libyan nationals hired to provide security at the U.S. missions in Tripoli and Benghazi.

Details on these alleged incidents stem in part from the testimony of a handful of whistleblowers who approached the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in the days and weeks following the attack on the Benghazi consulate. The incidents are disclosed in a letter to be sent Tuesday to Hillary Clinton from Rep. Darrell Issa, the chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Rep. Jason Chaffetz, the chairman of the oversight committee's subcommittee that deals with national security.

The State Department did not offer comment on the record last night.

The new information disclosed in the letter obtained by The Daily Beast strongly suggests the U.S. consulate in Benghazi and the late Ambassador Chris Stevens were known by U.S. security personnel to be targets for terrorists. Indeed, the terrorists made their threats openly on Facebook.

Curiously, Lake doesn't ask a really obvious question: why would a slew of "whistleblowers" go to Darrell Issa with their complaints about missed intelligence rather than Mike Rogers, Chair of the House Intelligence Committee? After all, if there was an intelligence failure, then it is HPSCI's job to do something about it.

The question is all the more curious given that Issa's Committee does not have the clearance for some levels of intelligence (the kind that sources who could well be these very same whistleblowers have already been sharing with Lake).

Meaning this letter will have an utterly predictable result: State will respond that they can't share the information that Issa is seeking. And then Issa will escalate this, turning his "investigation" into Son of Fast and Furious.

Moreover, this intelligence should have already been shared with the House (and Senate) Intelligence Committees (note that Peter King, a leaky sieve, sits on both committees). If it hasn't been, then Mike Rogers has all the more reason to escalate this issue. The only possible reasons for Issa to investigate this, then, is if 1) Rogers is failing to do his job and/or 2) this is just a stunt to turn a legitimate intelligence issue, the Benghazi attack, into a political attack on Obama.

Back in May, Mitt made it clear he was hoping for a hostage situation he could use as an electoral opportunity. Yesterday, Craig Unger confirmed what was already clear; Mitt intends to use the Benghazi attack as his "Jimmy Carter" strategy against Obama.

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.”

Since the presumed time of the meeting last week, Lake has written four stories about Benghazi.

But Unger’s source wouldn’t reveal what the second-prong of this attack was.

The source said that “there was quite a bit more” to the operation than simply revealing the intelligence regarding Libya. He declined to discuss what he described as the second phase of the operation.

According to Lake, Issa plans to hold an October 10 hearing on the Benghazi attack, even while Congress is out of session. That would put the hearing the day before the VP debate, and in plenty of time for Issa to create his scandal before the Presidential foreign policy debates on October 16 and 22.

I think it's fairly clear what the second prong of this strategy is.

But the whole strategy is premised on a very flawed premise: one that says Oversight should investigate things it doesn't have clearance for and that are solidly HPSCI's responsibility.

I actually do want to know what happened here, and I was suggesting it was a planned al Qaeda attack longer than Lake has been. But it's blatantly obvious Issa's investigation is not designed to find out what happened.