

PROGRESSIVES DEMAND HOUSE GOP COMMITTEE CHAIRS INVESTIGATE HUNTON & WILLIAMS

When I first posted on Hank Johnson's letter demanding an investigation into Hunton & Williams' appropriation of counterterrorist techniques to attack citizen speech, I was a bit skeptical. Without a way to get some coverage of the demand, such a letter risks being yet one more angry letter into the void.

But I will say the letter is well-constructed.

That's because it's addressed to the Chairmen of the Oversight, Judiciary, Intelligence, and Armed Services Committees: Darrell Issa, Lamar Smith, Mike Rogers, and Buck McKeon. So in addition to someone, like Smith, who can address the legal issues involved—notably, why DOJ was recommending H&W to Bank of America—Johnson and others have included Rogers and McKeon, who presumably know a good deal about how DOD has funded campaigns like the one H&W was going to launch against citizens.

Which brings us to the DOD tie-in:

The techniques may have been developed at U.S. government expense to target terrorists and other security threats. The emails indicated that these defense contractors planned to mine social network sites for information on Chamber critics; planned to plant “false documents” and “fake insider personas” that would be used to discredit the groups; and discussed the use of malicious and intrusive software (“malware”) to steal private information from the groups and disrupt their internal electronic communications.

[snip]

It is deeply troubling to think that tactics developed for use against terrorists may have been unleashed against American citizens.

[snip]

Possible proof the defense and security contractors may have traded on their government work is inferred by a November 3, 2010, sales proposal from Team Themis to Hunton & Williams: "Who better to develop a corporate information reconnaissance capability than companies that have been market leaders within the [Defense Department] and Intelligence Community?"

The focus, in other words, is not just on how such a campaign violates the law, but also how it represents the application of DOD-developed programs to private citizens exercising their First Amendment rights.

Sure, the GOP Chairs will ignore this.

But it'll make them complicit in protecting the Chamber's and H&W's misappropriation of DOD technology.