



ISSUE ANALYSIS

President Obama's Administration: Abuse of Power and Troubled Ethics

The President of the United States has displayed a willingness to violate the public trust placed in him as Chief Executive of the federal government. His administration often has justified means with ends, and too frequently has chosen those ends unworthy of our nation. Family Research Council (FRC) is concerned that the Obama Administration's ethical lapses and abuses of power—even in matters beyond FRC's core mission—will have direct and grave implications on the things we hold dear: the protection of human life, the health of the family, and religious liberty.

DHS Study examines "extreme right-wing" for terrorist threats – April 7, 2009

- A report by the Department of Homeland Security's Extremism and Radicalization Branch, Homeland Environment Threat Analysis Division focuses on "right-wing extremism" which it argues might be fueled by the election of the first black president, the poor economy, gun control efforts, illegal immigration, and the return of disgruntled military veterans.¹
- An analysis in the field of terrorism studies claims that right-wing terrorism is a greater threat to the nation than foreign Islamic jihadist activities.²

Operation Fast and Furious - October 2009

- During one of the largest gun-trafficking investigations, the Department of Justice (DOJ) mishandled almost 2,000 firearms, two of which were involved in the shooting of a U.S. border patrol agent, Brian Terry.
- Almost 2,000 weapons were sold to illicit buyers beginning in October of 2009, hoping to be tracked to Mexican drug cartels. However, as of September, 2012, 1,400 had yet to be recovered and many have turned up at crime scenes.³
- Republicans were outraged that the President and government officials claimed they had no knowledge of the Operation Fast and Furious until 2011. Attorney General (AG) Eric Holder claims that he didn't read any briefing documents sent to him outlining the scandal during the operation.⁴
- Currently in court, AG Holder and President Obama are asking to stop documents from being released that relate to Operation Fast and Furious. Mr. Obama essentially is trying to stop the trial indefinitely.
- AG Holder ended up being held in contempt of Congress and many Republicans called for his resignation.⁵

Obama oversteps on property rights – March 2010

- An internal White House document revealed by then-Sen. Jim DeMint (R-SC) and Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) showed that the Obama Administration wants to seize over 13 million acres of federal land via the 1906 Antiquities Act.⁶ The document listed as many as 14 pieces of land that “might be good candidates.” This move would impede economic growth and hinder the U.S.’s ability to become energy independent.^{7,8,9}
- The Obama Administration has also lost three property rights cases in the Supreme Court in the last 15 months: *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency* (9-0)¹⁰, *Arkansas Game & Fish Commission v. United States* (8-0)¹¹, and *Horne v. Department of Agriculture* (9-0).¹²

Affordable Care Act (ACA) - March 2010

- The federal government did a complete overhaul of the health care system with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that was passed in March of 2010.
- There are 18 new taxes contained in the new healthcare law, including 12 that violate the President’s pledge¹³ to not raise taxes for those making under \$250,000 per year.¹⁴
- The act charges the IRS with implementing 47 new provisions.¹⁵
- The government will charge \$695 per person who does not purchase “government-approved” health insurance.¹⁶
- Health insurance premiums are increasing drastically, especially for middle income families as the government does a comprehensive revision of the health care system.^{17,18}
- The ACA also is a threat to religious liberty by forcing employers to provide contraception and abortion-inducing drugs with very limited exceptions.^{19,20}

National Labor Relations Board Appointments - 2010, Court in 2011

- Mr. Obama appointed three members to the National Labor Relations Board while the Senate was still in session but on break.
- This action was unanimously ruled unconstitutional in a federal appeals court.²¹
- The Supreme Court will hear the case next term to decide whether or not Obama exceeded his constitutional authority.²²

Sending troops to Libya - May-October 2011

- President Obama continued to send air support to Libya without authorization from Congress.
- Mr. Obama downplayed the use of American military force in the situation, while Secretary Hillary Clinton boasted about the United States’ involvement saying, “We continue to provide the majority of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets.”²³

Solyndra - September 2011

- Solyndra, a solar panel manufacturer used by Mr. Obama to promote a green jobs initiative, filed for bankruptcy in 2011.
- In 2009, the Department of Energy loaned the company \$535 million despite a questionable financial history.
- Solyndra filed for bankruptcy and laid off 1,100 workers in 2011 and was bailed out by the Obama Administration.
- Before the bailout, an OMB analyst concluded that if the company were to be bailed out it would cost American taxpayers \$385 million. However, if the company were liquidated, taxpayers would only lose \$141 million.²⁴
- Solyndra's top financial backer, George Kaiser, a huge donor to the Obama Presidential campaign, reportedly made several trips to the White House. The George Kaiser Foundation made large donations to Solyndra and will be paid back before the American taxpayers in the bankruptcy proceedings.^{25,26,27}

IRS Targeting Conservative groups - 2011

- In 2011, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), responsible for enforcing tax law, began targeting conservative groups applying for tax exempt status.
- The IRS targeted groups with "Tea Party" or "patriot" in their title, sending them lengthy and intrusive questionnaires. In fact, no Tea Party or 9-12 groups were approved for tax exempt status in 2011.²⁸
- Multiple investigations have been launched and 25 groups have filed a lawsuit against the federal government.²⁹

President Obama released classified information on Bin Laden raid - August 2012

- The President has been accused of releasing too much information (such as the names of people and methodology of the raid) regarding the raid that killed Osama Bin Laden, endangering American troops in concurrent and future operations.
- Mr. Obama was accused by Mitt Romney and a group of former military and intelligence officers of leaking information that could compromise national security.^{30,31}
- The information was supposedly leaked to a Hollywood director by Mr. Obama's defense Department and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officers and the classified information contributed to the film "Zero Dark Thirty."^{32,33}

Benghazi - September 11, 2012

- On September 11, 2012, terrorists attacked the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, killing U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.
- Immediately afterward, Mr. Obama and then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton blamed the attacks on a YouTube video, denying it was an act of terror. Shortly thereafter, it became clear that the attack was a pre-planned act of terror.

- In the month leading up to the attack, there was a request for more security by U.S. officials in Benghazi, but it was denied.³⁴
- It has been revealed that the talking points for the Administration were engineered to hide information relevant to the attacks, specifically that there had been several smaller attacks in the same city leading up to the fatal attack and that there were possible ties to al-Qaeda.³⁵

West Point study links pro-life groups to terrorism - November 2012

- Dr. Arie Perlinger of the United States Military Academy, while analyzing “right-wing extremism,” compared pro-life groups to the KKK and Neo-Nazi groups. The study, titled “Challengers from the Sidelines: Understanding America’s Violent Far-Right,” claimed that radical right-wing ideology is grounded, in part, on the principle that “since every human being is created in the image of God, it is by definition a sin to end their lives before they have been able to ‘enjoy love and life of this planet,’” (p. 38).³⁶
- With respect to anti-abortion attacks, Perlinger observes that “pro-life violence is driven by several ideological building blocks that are enhanced by religious-based convictions, i.e., fetuses are human beings created in God’s image, and as such should be accorded the rights of humans from the moment of conception; any violent acts to end their lives are immoral and should be prevented,” (p. 38).^{37,38}

Obama nominates Tom Perez – March 17, 2013

- Mr. Obama nominated the former Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department Civil Rights Division to be his next Secretary of Labor. Just a week before the nomination, the Inspector General released a report describing hostile racial tensions in the Civil Rights Division.³⁹
- The report also questioned Mr. Perez’s public testimony regarding a case in 2010 that political appointees were not involved in the decision to drop charges against New Black Panther Party members related to voter intimidation.
- Mr. Perez was also criticized by many Republicans for not joining a False Claims Act case against the city of St. Paul, Minnesota. The lawsuit could have won the federal government up to \$180 million.⁴⁰

NSA collecting phone records of Verizon customers - April 2013

- Under a secret court order in April, Verizon Wireless, one of the largest cell phone providers in the U.S., was ordered to give over all of its phone records to the National Security Agency (NSA).
- According a document obtained by *The Guardian* newspaper, the court order requires Verizon to give the NSA on an “ongoing, daily basis” information on all telephone calls through its system within the U.S. and abroad.
- For the first time, communications between Americans are being seized indiscriminately and in bulk.

- The Bush Administration had been heavily criticized for collection of phone records; the Obama Administration has not only continued the practice, but drastically expanded its scope.^{41,42}

EPA scandals mount - April - June 2013

- Amidst the IRS scandal, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) faced accusations that it targeted conservative groups by charging fees for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, while largely exempting liberal groups.⁴³
- An EPA inspector general report in May revealed that contractors turned part of an EPA warehouse in Landover, Maryland into their own personal recreation rooms and gym. There were also rooms full of personal documents and passports. In his report, the inspector general said, "Our initial research at the EPA's Landover warehouse raised significant concerns with the lack of agency oversight of personal property and warehouse space at the facility."^{44, 45}
- The EPA leaked personal information on roughly 80,000 livestock and produce farmers to environmental activists via FOIA requests.⁴⁶

DOJ seized phone records of Fox News reporters - May 2013

- The Department of Justice (DOJ), through a court order, obtained access to several Fox News phone lines.
- In addition, there was a court approved search warrant for the personal e-mails and phone records of Fox News reporter James Rosen. While Rosen was not charged, his movements and communications were tracked.
- In an affidavit, a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent cited the Espionage Act and considered Rosen a possible "co-conspirator."
- Several of the phone numbers obtained by the DOJ were outside the Washington Bureau, including one number that matched the home phone number of Rosen's parents in Staten Island.⁴⁷

Seizing phone records of Associated Press - May 2013

- The Department of Justice seized phone records of 20 different phone lines of the *Associated Press*'s journalists and offices, including home and cell phones.
- The phone records were taken without notice for a two month period earlier in 2013, by an order which required the personal signature of Attorney General Eric Holder.
- AP was not told the reason for these actions but because of the timing and journalists targeted, it is possible that the seizure was related to an investigation of a leak about the CIA foiling a terrorist plot.
- According to this same *New York Times* article, "Under President Obama, six current and former government officials have been indicted in leak-related cases so far, twice the number brought under all previous administrations combined."⁴⁸

DOJ issues new speech codes for college campuses - May 2013

- In a letter⁴⁹ to the University of Montana, the Department of Justice and the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) redefined speech codes that would become a blueprint for all universities receiving federal funding.
- The letter created a new and sweeping definition of sexual harassment that defied previous precedent set by the Supreme Court.
- The DOJ did serious harm to free speech with significant financial consequences for universities that do not comply.^{50,51}

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius solicitation of funds - May 2013

- Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius made several fundraising phone calls asking potential donors to support Enroll America, an organization that will encourage Americans to sign up for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act.⁵²
- Sec. Sebelius has been criticized by Republicans for putting inappropriate and unethical pressure on insurers to donate money and creating a "pay to play" environment.
- The White House and Health Department have backed Sebelius and her fundraising tactics.⁵³

Promotion of Susan Rice - June 2013

- President Obama appointed U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice to be his new National Security Advisor, which did not require the Senate's approval.
- Amb. Rice is one of the government officials to incorrectly claim that the Benghazi attack was due to an anti-Islamic video.⁵⁴
- This appointment was sharply criticized by Republicans, including Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) who said Mr. Obama promoted someone who deliberately had misled the American people.⁵⁵

PRISM - June 2013

- The NSA and the FBI have, for an extended period, been tapping into online data from the servers of nine U.S. internet companies in a clandestine data mining program called PRISM.
- Agencies have been looking at video logs, photographs, documents, e-mails, and audio clips to track "foreign targets."
- PRISM collects data from: Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, and Apple. However, 98% of the information has come from Microsoft, Yahoo, and Google.
- The NSA now relies on PRISM as a leading source of information.⁵⁶
- Edward Snowden, a former technical assistant for the CIA and now former employee of the defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton, is responsible for leaking the information about PRISM.⁵⁷

- It has now been reported that the NSA has looked into 50 different companies, ranging from credit card firms, credit rating agencies, and internet service providers.⁵⁸ The Obama Administration reassures American citizens of the strong safeguards on this information, but the scale of the data collected and the means by which it is obtained invite serious questions about its security and potential misuse.
- Attorney General Eric Holder himself signed the orders allowing the NSA almost complete discrimination over what information they choose to possess, even without a warrant.⁵⁹

State Department cover-ups - June 2013

- Documents have emerged that the State Department may have tried to cover up allegations of inappropriate behavior within the Department. Evidence indicates that several investigations were manipulated, influenced or called off.
- Examples of investigations include: former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's security detail solicited prostitutes while on official trips; a security official in Beirut sexually assaulted embassy guards; and an underground drug ring near the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad that supplied illegal drugs to security personnel.⁶⁰

A soldier is punished for serving Chick-fil-A – June 5, 2013

- Army Master Sergeant Nathan Sommers was punished for hosting his own promotion party and serving Chick-fil-A sandwiches in honor of the Defense of Marriage Act.
- Sommers was investigated, reprimanded, threatened with judicial action, and given a bad efficiency report.
- The invitations said, "In honor of my promotion and in honor of the Defense of Marriage Act, I'm serving Chick-fil-A sandwiches at my promotion party." Sommers was told that "he [was] no longer a team player and was not performing up to standards."
- Chick-fil-A, a legitimate and popular restaurant chain, and DOMA, then the law of the land, were disparaged by the military's actions.⁶¹

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