

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD WOLF?

There are two key takeaways I get from this comprehensive WaPo piece on why Gitmo will never close.

First, after just one Congressman—VA's Frank Wolf—bitched about the plan to bring innocent Uighurs to the US, the plan was shut down (apparently unilaterally, by Rahm).

With chief of staff Rahm Emanuel at the helm of the meeting, senior national security officials agreed that eight of the 17 Uighurs being held at the off-shore facility would be resettled in the United States, most in Virginia. The Chinese Muslims would be brought in two at a time; the first two to come were chosen, in part, because they could speak reasonably good English and were likely to make a good impression given the intense media attention they probably would draw.

[snip]

"They were going to show up here, and we were going to announce it," said one senior official, describing the swift, secretive operation that was designed by the administration to preempt any political outcry that could prevent the transfer.

But before the plane could leave Cuba, word leaked to Rep. Frank R. Wolf that Guantanamo detainees were on their way to his district in Northern Virginia. Wolf, a Republican, had not been briefed on the matter by the White House, despite his history of defending the Uighur community in his district, and was infuriated by the move.

He faxed a letter to the Obama

administration and released it to the news media, declaring that the “American people cannot afford to simply take your word that these detainees, who were captured training in terrorist camps, are not a threat if released into our communities.”

The outrage from a single congressman was enough to spook the Obama administration, which quickly shelved its Uighur plan. Craig as well as a current senior official and a former senior official said they don’t know who stopped the transfer.

“They did not reconvene the principals,” Craig said. “They did not have a meeting in the Oval Office to discuss this and change the direction. It just happened: ‘We’re not doing it.’ ”

In fact, the transfer was stopped by Emanuel, according to officials familiar with Emanuel’s thinking. [my emphasis]

Sort of makes you wonder who leaked the information to that scary big bad Wolf, huh? All the more interesting given that Wolf was the guy who first asked OPR to do an inquiry into John Yoo’s torture memos; you’d think you could leverage that detail.

Also, note the interesting timing: The Uighurs just lost their latest attempt of an appeal to SCOTUS. So now they’re stuck so it’s okay to leak this information to the WaPo for a score-settling article?

The more important news, though, is that back in April 2009, Obama learned that there was real evidence on just dozens of the Gitmo detainees.

In late April, Obama heard some jarring news during a Situation Room meeting with the interagency task force reviewing the case of every detainee at Guantanamo.

The president asked Matthew G. Olsen, the Justice Department lawyer heading the task force, approximately how many Guantanamo detainees could be prosecuted, according to administration officials.

Probably fewer than 20, Olsen said.

[snip]

White House officials were in such disbelief that they asked Justice Department participants to write up a memo explaining exactly why they couldn't bring more of the men to trial. In many cases, the intelligence gathered on the men was not court-worthy evidence.

Now, you'd think a lawyer would conclude from the fact that there was no "court-worthy evidence" on the majority of men held in Gitmo that something was wrong with the selection process of those in Gitmo. You'd think that would provide an opportunity to pivot and level with the American people about what really went into the collection of a bunch of men turned over for bounty. You'd think that the President would have dealt with the underlying issue: that we had invented excuses to hold many of the men in Gitmo, or tortured excuses out of the others.

But instead, Obama decided to champion indefinite detention.

Indefinite detention of these men against whom we didn't—and in most cases, still don't—have court-worthy evidence.

Read the whole article. It describes how fear and Rahm's bureaucratic maneuvering led the Administration to completely cave on one of their earliest promises.