

JOHN RATCLIFFE DEMONSTRATES HOW HE'LL POLITICIZE INTELLIGENCE BY CLAIMING TRUMP HAS BEEN HONEST ABOUT COVID-19

John Ratcliffe just had his confirmation hearing to be Director of National Intelligence.

I'll have more to say about what we learned about the Intelligence Committee after I walk June Bug the Terrorist FosteX Dog. But the main takeaway from the hearing is entirely encapsulated in this exchange (my transcription):

Kamala Harris: Do you believe President Trump has accurately conveyed the threat of COVID-19 to the American people?

Ratcliffe: Are you saying, presently?

Harris: We are in the midst of the pandemic, presently correct.

Ratcliffe: Can you repeat the question? I guess I'm misunderstanding the question. I'm sorry. Has he accurately represented the status of the pandemic?

Harris: Conveyed the severity of the pandemic, yes, Has he accurately conveyed the severity of COVID-19 to the American people.

Ratcliffe: I believe so.

Harris asked a question which has just one true answer. The only objective answer to this question is that no, Trump has not accurately conveyed the seriousness of COVID-19.

Ratcliffe answered yes.

Ratcliffe was asked over and over again whether he'll politicize intelligence and each time he dutifully delivered his rehearsed answer, no, he won't. Both Politico and NBC reported those rehearsed answers as the "news" of the hearing. Neither mentioned the Harris exchange, where Ratcliffe answered far more clearly than in any yes or no questions that he will, in fact, lie to the American people to serve Trump (and there were other instances where he made it clear he will politicize intelligence, just not so clear cut).

It is a matter of life or death during a pandemic to separate false information from truth. Everyone should be doing that, and such truthful reporting is supposed to be the job of journalists. For political accountability on the pandemic to happen, it must be clear that Trump appointed a sycophant as Director of National Intelligence, someone who is unwilling to tell the truth about it. It must be clearly reported that Ratcliffe lied in this hearing about a clear factual issue. Hiding that fact by treating Ratcliffe's false assurances as truthful contributes to the danger of the pandemic.

Ratcliffe will be confirmed DNI. He might even get some Democratic votes, from people who view him as a less awful alternative than the Twitter troll turned German Ambassador turned part time DNI he would replace. But it matters that it be accurately reported that it was clear going into it that Ratcliffe would lie to and for Trump.