

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME, MIKE ROGERS EDITION

I'm going to level with you all. Today is my birthday.

And in honor of my birthday, apparently, two of my nemeses will shift their careers. At 3PM, Keith Alexander retires as Director of the NSA.

And in an entirely unexpected announcement, Congressman Mike Rogers announced he will not run for reelection this year.

Happy Birthday to me – and by extension, to all of you!

Now, Mike Rogers' excuse for retiring – that he's been offered a national radio show on Cumulus Radio – doesn't make sense. Less than a year ago, when he decided not to run for Carl Levin's seat, he said he felt he could still do a lot of good in the House. A key part of that, though, was that unlike other House Committees, the Republicans don't term limit the Intelligence Committee Chair position (the Democrats don't term limit anything). So a key reason Rogers gave was that he'd remain HPSCI Chair.

So I can't help but wonder whether his departure has something to do with his Chairmanship of the Intelligence Community (the original announcement last night from The Hill was that he was resigning the Chairmanship, with the even more horrible Mike Pompeo to take his place, with no mention of him retiring from Congress).

And I honestly wonder whether Rogers got caught revealing information so sensitive that he was told, by the Intelligence Community, to take a hike. Remember that after Richard Shelby leaked news that the NSA had overheard warnings of the 9/11 attack before it happened, he not only stepped down as Ranking Member (he had been

Chair) of the Senate Intelligence Committee, he left the Committee entirely. No one ever said that was the reason, but I've long assumed that's what happens when you step over the line of acceptable leaking as a Gang of Four member – you quietly walk away at the end of the term.

Pete Hoekstra leaked very damaging information in his last term as House Intel Chair – that we had a real-time intercept on Anwar al-Awlaki – though he had already announced he was leaving the House to run for Governor.

Mind you, most of the high volume of classified information Mike Rogers leaks, he does so with the blessing of the Intelligence Committee, as Gang of Four members are increasingly expected to serve as cut-outs for the Intelligence Community. Plus, much of what he "leaks" is in fact disinformation. Still, there are a number of stories that reveal NSA intercepts, many placed with conservative journalists, that could very easily have come from him. Some of them have been deemed more immediately damaging than all of Snowden's leaks. Rogers would be legally protected under the Speech and Debate Clause, but there'd be good reason to remove him from his sensitive position, if he had been discovered to be the source for those stories.

If that happened, I can imagine that facing the prospect of staying in the House without his powerful Intelligence gavel might persuade Rogers he'd rather froth up wingnuts for war on AM radio than while away with much less power in the House. Also, if he compromised intelligence, it'd explain why he's not moving on to a sinecure with an Intelligence Contractor, as had been floated at different times in the last year or so.

Meanwhile, Rogers' departure opens up a pretty decent opportunity for Democrats in a district they were otherwise (inexplicably) not going to seriously contest. The Clerk who married the first same sex couple last weekend, Barb Byrum, is among the potential Democratic candidates.

Anyway, at 3PM I shall raise a toast to the departure of Keith Alexander. And hope for better things in MI's 8th CD.