
From: Grindler, Gary (OAG)
To: Schmaler, Tracy (OPA); Attorney General; Richardson, Margaret (OAG)
Sent: 10/5/2011 7:17:38 PM
Subject: Re: WH briefing - q's on f and f

Good

From: Schmaler, Tracy (OPA)
Sent: Wednesday, October 05, 2011 06:54 PM
To: Attorney General; Richardson, Margaret (OAG); Grindler, Gary (OAG)
Subject: WH briefing - q's on f and f

Jay got a few q's ... they had our points and made them pretty effectively.

Q There have been calls for a general counsel to investigate whether or not the Attorney General perjured himself when testifying about Fast and Furious. Does the President have a reaction?

MR. CARNEY: Well, there has been one call -- and I think it's a biannual call for a special counsel by this particular congressman. Once every six months we hear something similar. And the fact is, the Attorney General's testimony to both the House and the Senate was consistent and truthful.

He said in both March and May of this year that he became aware of the questionable tactics employed in the Fast and Furious operation in early 2011, when ATF agents first raised them publicly. And he then asked the Inspector General's Office to investigate the matter, demonstrating how seriously he took them.

Q The question in May was when did he first hear about Fast and Furious? Not the questionable tactics, but when did he first hear of the program?

MR. CARNEY: Look, the Attorney General's testimony was consistent and truthful. And calls for special counsels, which seem to be a regular occurrence, do not change that fact.

And when the Attorney General learned about the questionable tactics, he asked the Inspector General's Office to investigate the matter.

. . . .

Q Thanks, Jay. I want to go back to Fast and Furious because what you said the Attorney General said is not what he said. He said, quote -- and this is in May of this year -- "I'm not sure of the exact date but I probably heard about Fast and Furious for the first time over the last few weeks." Now these documents that Jake was referring to say that he was actually told the first time about this July 2010 and October of 2010 --

MR. CARNEY: Well, you're suggesting -- first of all, I would refer you to the Department of Justice that is handling this.

Q He's the President's Attorney General, so --

MR. CARNEY: Yes, and the President believes he's an excellent Attorney General and has great confidence in him, and we absolutely know that the testimony he gave was consistent and truthful. And --

Q So how does he have confidence in him if he's a year off on what --

MR. CARNEY: If a piece of paper in a document that's many, many pages long contained a phrase that discussed nothing about the tactics that are at issue here, I think what we're talking about --

Q But he didn't talk about -- I just want to be clear. In his quote he never said tactics. He said --

MR. CARNEY: Ed, the Attorney General's testimony --

Q -- the first time he heard about it --

MR. CARNEY: -- was consistent and truthful.

Q -- and in the document, in July, he heard about it.

MR. CARNEY: Consistent and truthful.

Q Okay, but you're not addressing the fact that he was not talking about questionable tactics.

MR. CARNEY: I think I just did.

Q In his quote in May, he said, "The first time I heard about it was a few weeks ago."

MR. CARNEY: The issue here is not the name, it's what happened and the questionable tactics. When he heard that, as testified, he asked the Inspector General's Office to investigate it aggressively, and he has cooperated with -- the Department of Justice has cooperated with the congressional investigation. So what he's testified to is consistent and truthful, and his cooperation -- both the fact that he believes it was a problem that needed to be investigated is demonstrated by the action he took, and the department has cooperated with the Congress as it looks into the matter.

Q So to clear up any confusion, when was the first time the President --

MR. CARNEY: Again, I --

Q No, no, not the Attorney General. When was the first time the President heard about this program?

MR. CARNEY: Well, as he said in public, in a press conference, he heard about it when he read about it. And that was sometime earlier this year. I think the press conference was in El Salvador when he was on that trip, and he referenced having heard about it recently. I don't have a specific day.

Q Okay. And Sheryl Atkinson of CBS News is saying that a few days ago, I believe, a White House official and a Justice Department official was yelling and screaming at her -- she's been reporting about this for some time -- about this whole story.

You were a reporter once. When government officials start yelling at you,

sometimes it's because they're getting defensive, right? Why would they be yelling at her?

MR. CARNEY: First of all, I have no insight into the conversations she may or may not have had. Second of all, I know that you guys are all hard-bitten, veteran journalists and probably don't complain when you have tough conversations with your sources sometimes. Again, this is just generally speaking.

I don't know about it. I think it's --

Q But she's a credible reporter. When you say, "I'm not sure what conversations she had," I mean, she said this on the record that she was yelled at and screamed at. Why would the administration be yelling at her about this story? I don't --

MR. CARNEY: Again, I take issue with the report. I don't know that it's true. I'm just -- what I think is that I know you are tough enough to handle an extra decibel or two in a phone conversation. I'm not sure that that happened here, but it's a surprising complaint.