

To: Attorney General
From: Attorney General
Sent: Thur 10/6/2011 3:01:57 AM
Subject: Fwd: Darrell Issa to Eric Holder: Admit you knew - MJ Lee - POLITICO.com

Sent from my iPad2 - forgive my typos.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Matthew Miller <Matthew Miller>
Date: October 5, 2011 9:29:32 PM EDT
To: Attorney General >, Kevin Ohlson <kevin.ohlson@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Re: Fwd: Darrell Issa to Eric Holder: Admit you knew - MJ Lee - POLITICO.com
Reply-To: Matthew Miller <Matthew Miller>

I've been giving this a lot of thought today. The coverage really did break through -- the cables all spent time on it, and of course it was in the NYT this morning.

I think you have to personally answer this. Because the charge right now goes to your credibility, the answer has to come from you. The Department can do its defense as well, but you need to be out there defending it. So I would do two things immediately:

1. Send a letter to the Hill explaining what happened. Put in context the amount of information you get every week, say that you don't recall reading those bullets or being aware of Fast and Furious at any time before early this year, but in any event, you certainly weren't aware of the gun walking aspect of it until the news broke earlier this year (at which point you took immediate steps to have the IG investigate, etc.). This needs to happen tomorrow. In fact, it should've happened today. The last time your credibility was directly questioned was whether you had disclosed all of your amicus briefs -- the story started to break on a Thursday night, and we made people stay up all night compiling information so we could get a response out by 1 pm or so on Friday.
2. Find a way for you to get in front of a reporter or two about this. You don't want to call a press conference on this because it will blow things out perspective, but if you have any events in the next few days (preferably tomorrow), you could find a way to take two or three questions on it afterwards. Or if that's not easily doable, you could find a way to "run into" a couple of reporters on your way to something. Maybe Pete Williams, Carrie, Pete Yost -- that part can be managed. Most important is that you're in front of a camera in a relaxed manner giving a response you have rehearsed.

It would be ideal if those two things happened in the same day so you didn't have two news cycles of responding -- you want to do it all at once.

There may be things you need to do to go on offense as well, but I think most important right now is that you answer the charge about covering this up. Then you can move to offense.