

Commentary: Obama's wolves at the door

Michael Costello/Lewiston Tribune

A week ago, the Washington Post editorial board felt compelled to remind its readers that "the press must have the ability to ask questions." That editorial was in reaction to two known occasions when the Department of Justice accessed the phone records and emails of journalists who did dare to ask questions. The Post was defending the constitutional right of journalists to conduct investigative journalism, even if it causes discomfort to the most powerful man on Earth.

Of course, if the Post and its liberal news media brethren hadn't allowed this right to atrophy over the last five years, then its editors wouldn't have had to remind people that freedom of the press still exists.

Press harassment was just one of myriad scandals that have erupted in recent weeks. In the meantime, Barack Obama sandwiched Scandalpalooza with two speeches in which he argued for Americans yielding ever more control of their lives to an all-powerful federal government whose benevolence should not be questioned.

He advised Ohio State University's graduating class to ignore those who warn of government's tendency to drift toward despotism. "They'll warn that tyranny is always lurking just around the corner. You should reject these voices."

Well, among those who warned against tyranny were Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Fathers. And no, for you victims of modern education, Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Fathers was not the name of a doo-wop band from the '50s.

Three weeks later, during his commencement address at the U.S. Naval Academy, Obama claimed that distrust of big government contributed to a "cynicism that threatens our democracy." But in truth, distrust and cynicism should be part of the normal immune response that protects a healthy democracy from abuses of power such as those we've seen lately.

In the interval between those two speeches, State Department whistleblowers, who had been bullied into silence by their superiors, exposed the web of deception woven by the upper levels of the Obama administration to conceal their own incompetence and to appease apologists for Islamic terrorism.

We learned that Obama's IRS specifically targeted conservatives and Republican-allied issue advocacy organizations. Obama claims that he learned about it from the newspapers even though everybody around him seems to have known about it for months.

In each case, every excuse and explanation crumbled in the face of hard evidence.

The liberal media might have played along if the Department of Justice had not abused the 1917 Espionage Act to secretly gain access to phone records of Associated Press reporters. The AP

reported on a successful counterterrorism operation in Yemen. As a result, the cover of a critical British intelligence asset in the area was blown.

But according to the Washington Post, the AP withheld information regarding the Yemen operation until assured by the CIA that it was safe to release the story. But in releasing the information, the AP preempted Obama's plan to incorporate the operation's success into his re-election campaign. And that could not go unpunished.

In addition, the Justice Department gained access to Fox News reporter James Rosen's telephone records and personal emails. Rosen had reported that North Korea would react belligerently to tighter economic sanctions. That's a secret? Who didn't know that? To convince a judge to permit that access, Justice accused Rosen of criminal conspiracy to violate the Espionage Act.

Attorney General Eric Holder watched Rosen more closely than Tamerlan Tsarnaev.

Obama has used the Espionage Act to harass journalists more than all previous presidents combined.

In both cases, Holder claimed ignorance of the subpoenas. He claimed under oath that he had no part in the Rosen subpoena. Subsequent revelations have shown that Holder was intimately involved in the pursuit of the Rosen subpoena, even to the point of shopping for a judge who would grant him a secret subpoena.

An investigation was indicated. So Obama assigned Holder to investigate himself.

If that doesn't leave you cynical and distrustful, then you're part of the problem.

The news media hew closely to the liberal narrative that organizations such as the National Rifle Association, the Tea Party and others who defend the United States Constitution are fringe kook extremist weirdos who deserve ostracism and ridicule. So perhaps they would be well advised to consider the words of one of their historical heroes, Edward R. Murrow. After witnessing the rise of European fascism he observed that, "A nation of sheep begets a government of wolves."

Costello is a research technician at Washington State University. His email address is kozmcostello@hotmail.com.