

## THINKPROGRESS

# Irony Alert: 'Torture Memos' Author John Yoo Complains That Obama Is Bending The Law For Political Reasons

By **Alex Seitz-Wald** on Jun 23, 2011 at 3:30 pm

Weighing in on the [ongoing debate](#) over whether the U.S. military action in Libya is in violation of the War Powers Resolution, former Bush Justice Department officials John Yoo and Robert Delahunty wrote an op-ed in the Daily Caller slamming President Obama for "[ignoring](#)" the law for political reasons:

Just as the administration brushed aside the Constitution's limits on the federal government's powers over the domestic economy, **so too it is ignoring a national security law it believes to be constitutional simply because it stands in the way of Democratic Party goals.** [...]

Obama's indefensible interpretation of the WPR is transparently driven by politics. ... **These decisions show an administration that treats the law cynically and manipulatively, to achieve purely political ends.**



Yoo also wrote an [op-ed in the Wall Street Journal](#) last week criticizing House Republicans for not taking a harder line with Obama on the War Powers Resolution.

While Yoo's position on the Libya action may have some merit, it's supremely ironic for him to be lecturing anyone about stretching the law for political purposes, as he's best known for doing exactly that for the Bush administration. Yoo wrote the so-called "[torture memos](#)," which concocted [bogus](#) legal theories to justify the use of harsh interrogation techniques that flew in the face of [American](#) and [international laws](#). The memos, and Yoo's subsequent public defense of them, made Yoo the "[the most partisan](#) and intellectually dishonest lawyer in the country," in the words of civil liberties blogger Glenn Greenwald.

Yoo also helped build the dubious legal case for President Bush's [extra-legal](#) warrantless wiretapping program. A 2009 report from the inspectors general of five separate agencies involved in the wiretapping program found that Yoo gave "[flawed legal opinions](#)" and led "efforts to circumvent the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court" in the name of advancing Bush's foreign policy agenda.

Yoo never missed an opportunity to advocate for the expansion of Bush's executive authority, even saying the president could unilaterally authorize "[a village...to be massacred](#)" or that Congress could not stop the president from [using nuclear weapons](#).

But while he [stridently defended](#) Bush's authority, Yoo's tune seems to change when a Democrat inhabits the White House. In fact, his new position criticizing Obama's executive authority is basically a return to one he

espoused under President Clinton, when he repeatedly attacked the Democrat's "imperial presidency." Yoo wrote numerous Wall Street Journal columns and contributed a chapter to a book published by the Cato Institute discussing "how Clinton has abused constitutional restraints on his foreign power." He even suggested that Clinton viewed himself as a "king" above the law.

Indeed, if there's anyone who knows about "treat[ing] the law cynically and manipulatively, to achieve purely political ends," it's John Yoo.