



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 25, 2013

Mass. Senate Race: Gomez Name-Calls After Markey Attack Ad

The special election for U.S. Senate in Massachusetts has turned ugly, with Republican Gabriel Gomez (photo: right) calling Democrat Ed Markey “pond scum” after a Markey TV ad featuring a split screen with Gomez and the late al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. The Markey campaign has also run an ad ripping Gomez for opposing a ban on large-capacity gun magazines.



“And Gomez is against banning high-capacity magazines like the ones used in the Newtown shooting,” the narrator said in the Markey commercial, referring to the shooter at the Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, who killed 20 students six adults last December.

Gomez, a political newcomer, and Markey, a U.S. representative for the 7th District, now in his 37th year in Congress, are battling for the Senate seat vacated earlier this year when Democrat John Kerry retired from the Senate to become secretary of state. Neither candidate is pulling any punches in a campaign that doesn’t promise to get any prettier between now and the June 25 election.

“Comparing him to bin Laden?” said the voice-over in a Gomez ad. “Now Markey actually blames Gomez for the Newtown school shooting. Disgusting. 37 years in Congress. Dirty Ed Markey.”

“He is dirty Ed Markey,” Gomez insisted in an [interview](#) aired Thursday on National Public Radio. “And for him to be as dirty and low, pond scum, like to put me up next to bin Laden, he’s just gotta be called what he is. It’s that simple.”

The Markey ad focused on the role Gomez, a former Navy SEAL, played as a spokesman for Special Operations OPSEC Education Team, a group of former military and intelligence services personnel who say their mission is to stop politicians from “politically capitalizing on U.S. national security operations and secrets.” During last year’s presidential election campaign, the OPSEC (for Operations Security) team released a 22-minute video entitled [Dishonorable Disclosures: How leaks and politics threaten our national security](#). The video is harshly critical of President Obama, accusing him of compromising security in order to glorify his role in ordering the May 1, 2011 raid that killed bin Laden.

“Mr. President, you did not kill Osama bin Laden; America did,” Navy SEAL Ben Smith says in the video. “The work that the American military has done killed Osama bin Laden.” Jamie Williamson, a retired Special Forces colonel, said the cover name, actual name, and location of a special mission unit were revealed, compromising tactics, techniques, and procedures. The president created an “intelligence disaster,” OPSEC claimed, by releasing information that enabled Pakistan officials to find the doctor who helped U.S. troops, by briefing Hollywood filmmakers on the raid, and by using the successful attack on bin Laden in a campaign ad. The video ends by advising Obama to “shut up.”



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Gomez [appeared](#) on MSNBC as an OPSEC spokesman to talk about the video. He praised the president for authorizing the raid, but accused him of taking too much credit for it. "The only time that ... Lincoln and Eisenhower and other wartime presidents ever used the word 'I' was when they said 'I thank you' to the troops," Gomez said. "The point of the video is to highlight the difference between the current administration and how they viewed giving credit as opposed to other wartime presidents that have given credit in a different way."

The Obama campaign accused OPSEC of trying to "Swift Boat" the president, a reference to the Swift Boat Veterans of America campaign against John Kerry and his record of military service when the Massachusetts Democrat was his party's nominee for president in 2004.

Markey's campaign [ad](#) used a split screen to show an image of Gomez on the MSNBC program next to a picture of bin Laden. In politics as in sporting events, it is often the retaliatory hit that gets flagged. Gomez was widely criticized for his "pond scum" remark, while the Markey ad seemed to pass as, more or less, politics as usual.

"What dirty ad?" asked Democratic consultant Michael Goldman in an interview with National Public Radio. Gomez is just desperate to draw attention to himself and his campaign, Goldman said, adding: "That kind of language has no place in public life. He is basically lowering the level of discussion here." "We expect rough and tumble campaigns, but Gomez has crossed the line," said Tuft University political science professor Jeffery Berry. "The language is inappropriate and makes him look immature."

Gomez, 47, is a California native and the son of Columbia immigrants. He is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and received his MBA from Harvard Business School. A private equity investor, Gomez is making his first political race, having won a three-way primary race against opponents with longer ties to the state Republican Party. Polls have shown the rookie candidate trailing Markey by anywhere from four to 10 points, but Republicans are hoping lightning will strike twice in the same state. In January 2010, little known state Senator Scott Brown scored an upset victory over Attorney General Martha Coakley in a special election to fill the U.S. Senate seat made vacant by the death of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. Brown lost the seat last year to Elizabeth Warren.

Social conservatives among heavily outnumbered Massachusetts Republicans might find little reason to promote the candidacy of Gomez, who bills himself as a "new type of Republican," supporting same-sex marriage and immigration reform. He describes himself as a Catholic who is [opposed to abortion](#), but would not want to change any laws protecting abortion "rights."

In Massachusetts, there's not a lot of difference between a "new type of Republican" and a standard-issue Democrat.

Photos of Ed Markey and Gabriel Gomez: AP Images



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