

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 26, 2010 12:45 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Rothkopf article on Denis

Fyi

From: Slaughter, Anne-Marie
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Cc: Toiv, Nora F
Sent: Tue Oct 26 09:25:46 2010
Subject: Rothkopf article on Denis

Just wanted to make sure you saw this.

From: Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Monday, October 25, 2010 4:07 PM
To: Slaughter, Anne-Marie
Subject: RE: Rothkopf

Here it is:

http://rothkopf.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/10/22/tom_donilon_s_deal_with_the_devil

Tom Donilon's deal with the devil
Posted By David Rothkopf Friday, October 22, 2010 - 1:45 PM

They say politics makes strange bedfellows. That's a polite way of saying that if you want to make it in Washington, you don't always get to choose who is screwing you.

Take the case of Tom Donilon, President Barack Obama's choice to replace Gen. Jim Jones as national security advisor. Today it was announced that replacing Donilon as deputy national security advisor will be longtime Obama national security confidante, Denis McDonough. This was how most insiders expected things to play out. No national security official has been closer to the president longer than the intensely loyal McDonough.

Indeed, that was one of the biggest problems Jim Jones faced. McDonough was clearly a member of Obama's inner circle when the national security advisor was not. McDonough often second-guessed and even on a couple occasions publicly undercut Jones in front of other staff and in at least one instance in front of a reporter. He was seen as a kind of shadow national security advisor. In fact, he was also seen as operating very comfortably from the shadows, serving as the political Paulie Walnuts of the National Security Council (NSC), sending midnight emails, denying access and otherwise bullying reporters who dared to stray from the prescribed spin on countless stories.

Frankly, in Washington, a place where politics famously ain't beanbag, having a loyal, tough, and no-nonsense aide like that is useful. But if that aide's presence effectively blows up the management structure of the national security apparatus, it's a bit of a problem.

Fortunately for Donilon, he built his own close relationship with the president and he is likely to be considerably more empowered than Jones was. Unfortunately for him, McDonough will always be closer and now he will be Donilon's deputy -- thanks, presumably, to a deal that Donilon must have accepted but that no matter how enthusiastically he embraced publicly, he must privately have had some real doubts about.

Having learned from the experiences of the first two years, perhaps both Donilon and McDonough will manage a more disciplined relationship than that which undercut NSC effectiveness under Jones. But insiders are highly skeptical that McDonough will ever fall into line with the hierarchy or even that Obama really cares whether he does or not. Furthermore, there are already reports that the Donilon-McDonough relationship while functional has gone through frosty patches and that the level of mutual trust is not fantastically high.

Given all this, perhaps Donilon would be well advised not to have McDonough walking behind him down any of those long White House staircases because many feel that the man who was Obama's top campaign national security aide won't be fully satisfied until he is his top national security aide in the White House.

All that of course is speculation, gossip and fairly typical for any White House. What is a bigger immediate challenge is this: Whatever the reasons for Jones' struggles as national security advisor, he and the president always had Donilon to do the vitally important work of making the NSC deputies' process run smoothly. The deputies' process is where the real policy heavy lifting gets done and even critics of the Donilon choice to be national security advisor acknowledge that he managed that process with great dexterity, a view that is echoed by virtually all the deputies with whom he worked.

Donilon's biggest problem is that he has no Donilon. McDonough lacks the bureaucratic sophistication built up over the years by Donilon including the knowledge of the various key cabinet departments (Donilon was Warren Christopher's right hand guy at State, after all). Most importantly, it seems highly unlikely that the combative McDonough will be seen by anyone as an honest broker -- the impartial manager of an inclusive policy process. Indeed, McDonough is being asked to play against his real strengths in much the same way that Rahm Emanuel was as White House chief of staff. There's a reason Paulie Walnuts never made it to the top job, struggling with the transition from capo to underboss. The Peter Principle works in the swamplands of Washington just like it does in the swamplands of North Jersey.

From: Slaughter, Anne-Marie
Sent: Monday, October 25, 2010 4:04 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: Rothkopf

Whoah. I haven't seen it, but will read and will do. Doesn't sound like him.

From: Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Monday, October 25, 2010 3:57 PM
To: Slaughter, Anne-Marie
Subject: Rothkopf

David Rothkopf is a friend of yours, right? If so, can you convey to him that I absolutely never respond to pieces I read in the press, but I was sufficiently taken aback by his piece on Denis -- and how wrong it was -- that I think he should know at least this one guy thinks it was a shocking piece of work. And you know what it takes for me to say something like that.