

DID ERIC EDELMAN STEAL ROBERT GATES' MAIL?

I've been following the little squabble between Cheney hack Eric Edelman and Hillary. There was his nasty letter and Hillary's excellent response. Now Gates has entered the fray, embracing oversight and (backhandedly) slapping down the nasty Edelman.

I have long been a staunch advocate of Congressional oversight, first at the CIA and now at the Defense Department. I have said on several occasions in recent months that I believe that congressional debate on Iraq has been constructive and appropriate. **I had not seen Senator Clinton's reply to Ambassador Edelman's letter until today.** I am looking into the issues she raised and will respond to them early next week. [my emphasis]

Now, I'm a little confused by that bolded line, explaining that Gates hadn't seen Hillary's letter. From the context, he appears to be referring to Hillary's July 19 letter, the nasty-gram telling on Edelman. But that doesn't entirely make sense. **Of course** he hadn't seen Hillary's letter until today (meaning yesterday). She only wrote it the day before.

Anne Kornblut reads that sentence differently.

In a statement, Gates said that he had not seen Clinton's original letter, but he added that he welcomes congressional involvement.

Now, again, the plain English reading of the sentence says Kornblut is wrong and Gates is just weird—that he must be referring to Thursday's letter. But what if he's not? That

is, what if he never saw her May 22 letter?

After all, if there's one M.O. that Cheney delights in, it's in controlling the flow of information so he can impose his will even on his bureaucratic enemies. He had a spy in the White House (probably named Hadley) so he could know about everything that went to Condi. He had Bolton in State so he knew most of what went on in Powell's camp. And as the recent WaPo series revealed, he was constantly hiding his tracks. So it would be pretty predictable for Edelman, the Cheney plant at DOD, to intercept a letter calling for a policy that Cheney opposed. Perhaps Edelman sat on it for two months—what **is** the explanation for the two months lapse in response, anyway? And then when he finally had to respond, Edelman responded with nasty accusations.

So is Gates trying to say that he never received Hillary's original letter? As I said, plain English calls for a different explanation. But in Cheney-speak, another reading is quite possible.