

# RAHM'S CONTACTS

I'm still trying to sort through the conflicting stories on contacts Rahm Emanuel had with Rod Blagojevich and his crowd. One of two things is going on:

1. Rahm has been less than forthcoming in describing his contacts with Blagojevich and his minions.

**AND/OR**

2. There has been a sustained effort to misrepresent Rahm's contacts with the governor.

Note the AND/OR there: I believe both are true, to a point. Which is why I'm still trying to wade through these details.

## **Did Rahm call Blago in December?**

The most recent conflicting data point is this one, included in a Sun-Times story reporting on Reid's contact with Blago:

Before [Reid's and Menendez's conversations with Blago on December 3], Obama's chief of staff Rahm Emanuel called Blagojevich to tell him to expect to hear from Senate leadership because they were pushing against Jackson and others, according to statements the governor made to others.

This would seem to conflict with Rahm's representation to Obama's team, which asserted that he had only spoken directly to Blago one or two times—both in early November.

Mr. Emanuel had one or two telephone calls with Governor Blagojevich. Those conversations occurred between November 6 and November 8, 2008.

There are a couple of ways to resolve this

contradiction, neither one of them very satisfying. First, it is possible (though highly improbable) that Rahm told Blago on November 8 that Senate leadership would call him (though note that—at that point—Schumer had not yet announced his resignation as DSCC Chair), and they simply didn't get around to calling him until December. This is unlikely for two reasons: Obama's team hadn't even given Blago their "list" yet, so it seems unlikely that Reid and Menendez or Schumer were already lobbying heavily. And then there's the unrealistic delay of almost a month, during a period when it was never clear whether Blago was about to appoint someone in the near future or not.

The other way to resolve the contradiction is via the dodge I pointed out earlier. The Obama report does not claim to be a comprehensive on all contacts between Obama's team and Blago's team; it is limited to conversations **relating to Obama's successor**.

On December 11, 2008, the President-Elect asked the White House Counsel-designate to determine whether there had been any staff contacts or communications – and the nature of any such contacts of communications – between the transition and Governor Blagojevich and his office **relating to the selection of the President-Elect's successor** in the United States Senate.

The fact that Rahm did not know whether he had one or two conversations with Blago directly about the Senate seat suggests there were other conversations on different subjects. After all, presumably Rahm could check his cell phone records to find out the total number of calls with Blago, so his uncertainty on number suggests an uncertainty about the content of the calls, not an uncertainty about the number of calls.

Thus, given the way this report is scoped narrowly to cover only contacts about the Senate

seat, it's possible that as Rahm was discussing other issues with Blago—such as the special election to replace him—Rahm mentioned that Harry Reid would call, without much else. How a smart guy like Rahm could imagine that that didn't pertain to Obama's seat and therefore rationalize leaving it off the report on contacts, since Reid wouldn't much care about Rahm's seat, I don't know.

Also, add in the possibility that the Sun-Times reference to Rahm calling Blago was the same metonymy that Axelrod got in trouble for earlier: representing a contact with a Blago representative as a contact with Blago. Given the possibility that John Wyma was preparing to speak to Rahm after November 13, as suggested by the complaint, this opens up other ways for a Rahm contact with Blago's team—but not Blago—sometime closer to the Reid and Menendez phone calls on December 3.

**Did Blago make up a December Rahm call, either in December or more recently?**

But there is another possibility: that Rahm never actually called. To understand why, consider the structure of this statement:

Before their contacts, Obama's chief of staff Rahm Emanuel called Blagojevich to tell him to expect to hear from Senate leadership because they were pushing against Jackson and others, according to statements the governor made to others.

This claim is based not on Blago's assertion to the reporters who wrote this story, but on assertions Blago "made to others," with no qualification as to when Blago made the statements or what his potential motivations might have been. Which, as I suggested yesterday, could mean one of several things.

- Blago was taped around about December 3 saying, factually, "Rahm called me

and said Reid is going to call" and somehow those tape contents found their way to the Sun-Times.

- Blago told people around about December 3 that "Rahm called me and said Reid is going to call" and those people are now sharing that information with the Sun-Times (note, these people could just as easily be JJJ associates as Blago associates).
- Blago told people, after he was arrested but before Obama released his report, that "Back in December Rahm called me and said Reid is going to call" and those people are now sharing it with the Sun-Times (these people would be more likely to be Blago associates, but could still be JJJ associates).
- Blago has directed people to tell the Sun-Times in the last week or so that "back in December, Rahm called me and said Reid is going to call" and those people are now doing Blago's bidding.

Given that Blago now knows tapes exist but did not before December 3 and given that Blago saw Rahm's version of affairs on December 23 with the rest of us, some of these are more likely

than others (that is, it would be stupid for him to claim, now, that Rahm called on December 3 if he did not call at all, since that would be easily disproven). And, depending on the timing, Blago's motivation for doing this would be different; inventing a Rahm call in December might have served to heighten the urgency of donations for JJJ's associations, whereas doing so in the last week would fit Blago's race-baiting strategy to get Burris appointed. And anything Blago has said in the last month may be intended for potential jurors, as LabDancer reminded me yesterday.

Again, I don't know which of these many scenarios is true. But there are at least two other major discrepancies between Rahm's claims about his contacts and what has been reported about his contacts. There's the question of whether or not Rahm included JJJ and Cheryle Jackson on the list of candidates Obama found acceptable for the seat, as I laid out yesterday. And there are the reports that Rahm had 21 contacts with Blago's team (which might easily be explained by the Obama report dodge if there were 15 contacts with Blago's team on subjects unrelated to the Senate seat).

Which is why I come back to that AND/OR distinction. There appears to be some contest over what Rahm said when, with multiple players playing to get their side out. I find that curious.