

THE LACK OF DISCIPLINE IS SPELLED R-A-H-M

George Packer has an amusing reflection on
Obama's obsession with appearing disciplined.
(via Laura)

While reporting my piece on Richard Holbrooke (still subscribers only—so if you can't beat 'em, join 'em), I learned just how much the Obama White House hates for anything about its policies that doesn't originate with it to appear in print. Especially anything that describes how policies are reached, who argued what position, and, above all, what the President thought. They *really* hate it. On the other hand, it's not easy to get the White House to discuss such things with a writer—certainly not on the record. As a result, it takes a mighty effort (at least, it took a mighty effort for this not-very-plugged-in New York-based writer) to get rudimentary answers.

[snip]

People in the Administration tell me that the horror of unauthorized press accounts is of a piece with the no-drama Obama campaign. They say that Obama hates “process” stories because they end up focussing on trivial matters of personality. They also say that the White House wants to give the impression that everything flows from the top.

Dude! President Obama? Let me help you out here. It took five days—five days!!—for the extraordinary discipline of your campaign to go to shit after you picked Beltway leaker extraordinaire Rahm Emanuel to be your Chief of Staff.

Maybe it's the addition of beltway

leaker extraordinaire, Rahm Emanuel, to the team, but it appears that the Obama team may have adopted a new policy on leaks, departing from their eerily disciplined no-leak approach during the campaign.

Now, I can't prove causation there, but there's a pretty strong correlation between that one personnel move and a complete reversal of the No Drama Obama you managed so well during the campaign.

Packer raises some fair objections to the interest in such disciplined messaging. But whether you think it's a good thing or a bad thing, it seems to me Obama has some very clear options if he wants to return to the discipline of yore.