

RAHM'S GREG CRAIG CAMPAIGN

How many stories—transparently sourced to Rahm Emanuel and predicting Greg Craig's demise—have to appear before people start asking why Rahm is so persistently targeting Craig? Today's NYT story follows on at least three other stories of the same genre (one, two, three). And it hides Rahm's tracks even less than the earlier examples from the genre. There's the on the record quote from Rahm.

"The president believes he has done a very good job and continues to do a very good job," Mr. Emanuel said. "The notion that you're going to blame him is ridiculous. He didn't create Guantánamo. He is trying to work within the system to meet the president's goal."

There's the blame on Rahm for trimming Craig's portfolio on high profile issues.

At moments, it has looked as if Mr. Craig's authority has been trimmed back. Rahm Emanuel, the White House chief of staff, assigned Pete Rouse, a senior adviser with deep ties to Capitol Hill, to oversee Guantánamo issues.

Similarly, after Mr. Craig started the search that produced the Supreme Court nomination of Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Mr. Emanuel assigned the confirmation fight to Ronald A. Klain and Cynthia Hogan, aides to Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. with long experience handling judicial appointments.

In both instances, White House officials said that Mr. Craig remained involved but that it made sense to tap people with political backgrounds to manage political issues, particularly since Mr. Craig had so many other duties, like

scrutinizing legislation, vetting appointees and selecting judges.

And there's the description of Rahm's juvenile taunts going back to the Lewinsky days.

He studied law at Yale with Bill and Hillary Rodham Clinton and joined the Clinton White House in 1998 to fight impeachment. Longtime aides resented the newcomer. When the announcement of his appointment described Mr. Craig as the "quarterback" of the impeachment defense, some Clinton aides, including Mr. Emanuel, derisively referred to him as "QB." (All these years later, Mr. Emanuel said he liked and respected Mr. Craig.)

Mind you, this particular version of the Rahm-attacks-Craig story seems like it may be pushback, perhaps the beginning of a campaign to pre-empt the firing of Craig as a scape-goat for the Administration's failure to meet its Gitmo deadline next January. In fact that's precisely what Human Rights Watch's Tom Malinowski suggests is happening.

"To make Greg the fall guy, if that indeed is what they're doing, is profoundly disingenuous," Mr. Malinowski said.

Nevertheless, the narrative is always the same: Rahm attacking Craig for perceived failures relating to Gitmo and torture.

I understand the Village may like these conflict stories. But at some point, the persistence of these repeated stories become the story. After all, how many times do journalists have to grant anonymity to help hide the Administration's real stance on torture and Gitmo?