

CLEMONS ON THE LEAKS THAT DID CRAIG IN

Since we've chatted so much about the Greg Craig ouster, I thought I'd link to Steve Clemons' piece on it (which uses a Nina Totenberg quote to suggest my reading—that this came from Rahm—is correct). The most interesting news in Steve's piece is this tidbit.

Gregory Craig, White House counsel to President Obama and national security advisor to Obama during the presidential campaign, resigned his post this past Friday. But when rumors broke Thursday of his imminent departure, Craig had not written his farewell note and may not have planned to leave — yet.

I guess that's a polite way of saying—in a piece about White House leaks—that whoever was spreading that news on Thursday night knew of Craig's ouster before Craig himself did.

The rest of Steve's piece serves as a nice object lesson for President Obama about what happens when No Drama Obama is replaced by Rahmpant leaking.

But the sustained nature of the leaks and—and the fact that they ultimately proved to be true—indicates something quite disappointing for anyone who had hoped that the Obama White House would operate more transparently and honestly than the Bush team had.

In fact, leaks are becoming standard fare by key players in the Obama administration. Someone, most likely on the military/intel side of the president's national security bureaucracy, leaked Afghanistan Commanding General Stanley McChrystal's report to Bob Woodward. Recently, other political players infuriated U.S.

Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry by leaking his eleventh-hour contrarian view on a U.S. force surge to the press.

But it's quite hard to maintain the kind of Obama-esque upbeat tone of transparency and forthrightness and punish staff for leaking when the president himself is standing by and doing nothing as his closest advisors undermine one of their own.

[snip]

Now that the White House has opened the door to the political tradecraft of leaks, others on the Obama team may feel empowered to deploy these indirect assaults in their own battles against internal foes. Given the "team of rivals" Obama has assembled in nearly every policy arena, the coming policy wars in and around the White House will be fascinating to watch.

Now, Steve is, as always, exceedingly polite here, so he doesn't connect these events as closely as he might have.

But he's clearly suggesting that once you let Rahm and his leaky mouth run rampant, then you can't very well complain when General McChrystal uses leaks to force Obama's hand on Afghanistan—or when Eikenberry (whom the White House seems to accuse of leaking his own statements) of returning the fire.

And that deal with the Devil does more than just make the White House an unpleasant place to work. It also makes Obama more vulnerable. No matter what Obama thinks of him, Rahm is far from the most adept player at beltway leaks. So by tolerating this practice, Obama puts himself at risk.