

WHAT DID HILLARY THINK ABOUT MCCHRYSTAL'S FIRING?

✘ There's a lot that's interesting in this tick-tock of General McChrystal's firing. It's a finely crafted narrative, down to the foregrounding of Joe Biden, in spite of the way that the chronology appears to belie that narrative (that is, the chronology appears to start when the White House Press Office learns about the article). And note the way the normally cowardly anonymous source, Rahm Emanuel, is on the record, as the story's official narrator?

"He likes Stan and thinks Stan is a good man, a good general and a good soldier," Mr. Emanuel said. "But as he said in his statement, this is bigger than any one person."

But I'm most curious this paragraph:

On Tuesday, while General McChrystal was making the 14-hour flight to Washington, the White House was involved in a whirl of meetings about his fate. Along with Mr. Gates, aides say, four other senior officials were influential: Vice President Biden; the national security adviser, Gen. James L. Jones; the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Adm. Mike Mullen; and Mr. Emanuel.

Compare this paragraph with the picture, above, of the Afghan strategy meeting held after Obama canned McChrystal, conveniently arranged by protocol in proximity to the President: Joe Biden, James Jones, Bob Gates, Hillary Clinton, Mike Mullen, Rahm Emanuel, David Petraeus, Tom Donilon, John Brennan (here's the official description of the Pete Souza WH picture).

That is, if the decision were made according to seniority, then someone is missing from the list of five important decision-makers counseling Obama (which include Gates, Biden, Jones, Mullen, and Rahm): Hillary Clinton.

Rahm, the official narrator here, says Hillary wasn't one of the five advisors most central to the decision to can McChrystal.

There are a number of reasons why I find that interesting. First, as has been noted by a number of people, Hillary was one of the few top Obama advisors not slagged by McChrystal's aides in the Rolling Stone story. On the contrary, the article specifically singles out Hillary for a compliment from McChrystal's aides.

Only Hillary Clinton receives good reviews from McChrystal's inner circle. "Hillary had Stan's back during the strategic review," says an adviser. "She said, 'If Stan wants it, give him what he needs.' "

Nevertheless, McChrystal's inability to cooperate with two people in Hillary's portfolio—Richard Holbrooke and Karl Eikenberry—is one of the chief complaints McChrystal's aides had.

Then there's the fact that perhaps the biggest reason why Barack Obama is President right now and Hillary is Secretary of State instead is that she refused to fire her incompetent advisors during the campaign. Was she out of the loop on this firing as well?

Of course, Rahm and Hillary have their own history, and if Rahm was the narrator here, it might explain why Hillary was not depicted as one of the power players.

All of this is just Kremlinology, of course. But it says something that the White House chose to deploy Rahm to give an on-the-record account of Obama's decisiveness here. And that that official record left out Hillary, either because

she wasn't involved or her involvement didn't serve the overall narrative.