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PART B6

From: Cheryl Mills <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, November 28, 2012 8:00 AM
To: H
Subject: Fwd: Politico - McCain and Hillary's bipartisan bond

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From: Lieberman, Dean
Sent: Wednesday, November 28, 2012 7:56 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Reines, Philippe I; Adams, David S; Verma, Richard R; Coordination
Subject: Politico - McCain and Hillary's bipartisan bond

The Graham quote referenced on the call is pasted below and the full text of the piece follows:

But as Clinton exits the world stage — albeit perhaps temporarily — Graham and other Republicans are signaling she may not escape the Benghazi debacle entirely unscathed.

"Just stay tuned," Graham said. "I fully intend, as much as I like Secretary Clinton, to challenge her to tell me why you did not reinforce the consulate, what did you do with the Aug. 16 cable that says there are 10 Al Qaeda militia roaming around and we can't withstand a coordinated attack.

"I think the State Department has a lot of explaining to do."

McCain and Hillary's bipartisan bond

Politico

Tuesday, November 27, 2012 06:36 PM EST

By: Scott Wong

Sen. John McCain renewed his attacks on U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice on Tuesday, but he's gone soft on Hillary.

As she wraps up her tenure at Foggy Bottom and mulls over a possible 2016 White House bid, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's decade-old bipartisan friendship with McCain appears to have helped shield her from GOP fire — even as her agency finds itself in the thick of a partisan battle over Benghazi.

But McCain and Clinton also are battle-tested veterans of Washington who have seen their families become targets of nasty political attacks — and who have often turned to laughter to get through it all. For Clinton, it was Monica Lewinsky; for McCain it was the smear campaign during the 2000 GOP primary aimed at his Bangladesh-born adopted daughter.

"I think it was the best version of strange bedfellows and at the same time a perfect match," Tamera Luzzatto, Clinton's Senate chief of staff from 2001 to 2009, said of her former boss's relationship with McCain. "They share a sense of public service but also a sense of humor."

McCain, a leading voice on defense and foreign policy matters, has spent weeks belittling Rice as "not very bright," incompetent and "not qualified" to succeed Clinton as secretary of state. Rice's offense: incorrectly characterizing the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Libya as sparked by spontaneous protests rather than as a deliberate act of terrorism — a lapse she has blamed on administration talking points that were approved by intelligence officials.

But the Arizona Republican has largely spared Clinton from any criticism over the Sept. 11 Benghazi assault that killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans. When Clinton tried to fall on her sword, saying she alone was responsible for diplomatic security, McCain wouldn't have it. He called Clinton's act "laudable" but was adamant that the buck stops with President Barack Obama and that he would try to block Rice's possible nomination as the nation's top diplomat.

While McCain seemed to dial back his attacks on Rice over the weekend, the senator was at it again Tuesday after he and fellow GOP Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire sat down with Rice at the Capitol to quiz her about why the Obama administration mischaracterized the attack as other than terrorism.

"We are significantly troubled by many of the answers that we got and some that we didn't get," McCain told reporters after the meeting. "It is clear the information that she gave the American people was incorrect."

Asked pointedly why he hasn't been as critical of Clinton, McCain did not directly mention the secretary, who has decided against staying on for a second term.

"I've said it continuously that the State Department has responsibility," McCain told POLITICO. "I have been very critical of the State Department and their actions. I've been critical of everybody's actions."

It wasn't the first time this year that McCain came to the former New York senator's defense. In July, McCain took to the Senate floor and denounced Rep. Michele Bachmann and four other House Republicans for alleging that longtime Clinton aide Huma Abedin was working with the Muslim Brotherhood to infiltrate the top rungs of the U.S. government.

The allegations, McCain said in his speech, amount to an "unwarranted and unfounded attack on an honorable woman, a dedicated American and a loyal public servant."

The gratitude from the Clinton camp that day was palpable.

"We were all so very moved when Sen. McCain took to the Senate floor that day. It was nothing short of remarkable," said Clinton's longtime spokesman, Philippe Reines. "But after being around him all those years in the Senate and since, and seeing firsthand his fondness and respect for Huma, it was not surprising at all.

"And when someone of Sen. McCain's stature stood up for her," he said, "it really gives people pause before trafficking in vicious and disgusting lies."

McCain first met Clinton when she was first lady and got to know her better as he worked with her husband in the mid-1990s on normalizing diplomatic relations with Vietnam, where the former Navy pilot endured 5½ years as a prison of war after his plane was shot down. The daughter of a World War II Navy officer herself, Clinton admired McCain's military service, and the two spent countless hours together at markups and hearings of the Senate Armed Services Committee after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"Like her husband, she really studies the issues, she is a policy wonk, and I mean that in a complimentary fashion," McCain told POLITICO on Tuesday. "She puts people at ease, she is a role model to a lot of young women in America — my daughter [Meghan] admires her a great deal.

“Some people you hit it off with, some people not so much. She and I seemed to hit it off with each other and enjoy each other’s company.”

Senate Homeland Security Committee Chairman Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) has traveled extensively with McCain and Clinton and watched their relationship grow.

“To put it mildly, they don’t always agree. John and I have been pestering and pressuring the administration, including the secretary, on current matters like Syria, that we’re not doing enough in Syria,” Lieberman told POLITICO. “But there is a strong, mutually respectful, personal relationship, and it’s quite cordial.

“When we’re all together, we not only talk seriously — we laugh a lot.”

In 2008, McCain and Clinton were almost presidential rivals — if not for a young, charismatic upstart named Barack Obama. Four years earlier, the two senators found themselves side by side on a small cruise ship in the Arctic Circle, bundled up in jackets and ball caps and gazing at the “midnight sun” in Svalbard.

Invited by the Norwegian government, Clinton and McCain flew to the remote archipelago — famous for its 24 hours of continuous sunlight — to see firsthand the effects of climate change on the melting ice cap.

It was “a shared experience being in a place where we sat outside and watched the sun go down and just touch the horizon and then go back up,” McCain recalled.

Svalbard would be the first of many trips abroad together for the future secretary of state and 2008 GOP standard-bearer: During a 2006 visit to Estonia, Clinton reportedly challenged McCain to a vodka-drinking contest, the two have frequently met up at the annual Munich Security Conference, and they’ve dropped into military hot spots like Iraq.

“They are two people I would invite to a party,” said Graham, another frequent traveling companion.

But as Clinton exits the world stage — albeit perhaps temporarily — Graham and other Republicans are signaling she may not escape the Benghazi debacle entirely unscathed.

"Just stay tuned," Graham said. "I fully intend, as much as I like Secretary Clinton, to challenge her to tell me why you did not reinforce the consulate, what did you do with the Aug. 16 cable that says there are 10 Al Qaeda militia roaming around and we can't withstand a coordinated attack.

"I think the State Department has a lot of explaining to do."

But is Clinton qualified to be president?

"Of course she is. She's already run, came very close to the nomination, been a very successful secretary of state," McCain said. "And I wouldn't be surprised if her husband had a certain yearning to live in the White House again."

Once you've been there you want to go back, a reporter replied.

"I wouldn't know," McCain said, chuckling.