

RELEASE IN PART B5,B6

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2011 7:17 AM
To: H
Subject: FW: Mari Carmen

FYI below – not sure you have time.

Will get you points in case you do

cdm

From: Adams, David S
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2011 6:40 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Blumenfeld, Joshua R
Subject: Re: Mari Carmen

From: Mills, Cheryl D
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2011 02:38 AM
To: Adams, David S; Blumenfeld, Joshua R
Subject: Fw: Mari Carmen

Thoughts?

cdm

From: Ricki Seidman [mailto:rseidman@]
Sent: Sunday, December 11, 2011 09:18 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: Mari Carmen

Hi,

B5

B6

Thanks a lot, best, Ricki

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/10/opinion/collins-the-ghost-of-boyfriends-past.html? r=1&ref=gailcollins>
December 9, 2011

The Ghosts of Boyfriends Past

By GAIL COLLINS

New unnerving development in Congress: Some senators are claiming that a woman nominated to be ambassador to El Salvador can't have the job because they don't like a boyfriend she lived with almost 20 years ago.

These days, it's hard enough to get kids to understand the possible future employment consequences of appearing naked on Facebook. If they hear about this one, they'll give up entirely.

The debate involves Mari Carmen Aponte, who has been functioning as ambassador under a recess appointment by President Obama that runs out soon. The Democrats plan to make a last-ditch attempt to approve the nomination, but the Senate Republicans seem determined to block it.

"All of us think we should have an ambassador in El Salvador, but all of us are concerned that we get people who we know are the right people," said Senator Jim DeMint of South Carolina. DeMint claimed the Republicans needed more information on Aponte's relationship with Roberto Tamayo, a Cuban-American insurance salesman with whom she lived in Washington long ago.

A defecting Cuban intelligence agent claimed in 1993 that Fidel Castro's spies were trying to recruit Aponte through Tamayo, who had friends at the Cuban diplomatic mission in Washington. However, a retired U.S. counterintelligence agent told The Washington Times that Tamayo was, in fact, an informant for the F.B.I.

This sounds like a complicated boyfriend. However, who of us does not have a difficult significant other in the distant past? There has to be a statute of limitations on this sort of thing, and my vote would be for a decade, max.

The government checked Aponte and found no nefarious Cuban connection. She broke up with Tamayo in 1994 and has received several top-secret security clearances since. She has many supporters who say she's terrific, including Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey, who is second to none in his sensitivity on Cuban-related issues. Her supporters cite a list of achievements during her brief tenure as ambassador, one of which was getting El Salvador to send troops to Afghanistan. (Who knew?)

It's always been hard to get Obama appointees past Senate Republicans. Remember the time when then-Senator Jim Bunning of Kentucky held up the confirmation of the deputy U.S. trade representative because he was angry at Canada for banning the sale of candy-flavored tobacco? Or when Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama held up 70-plus pending nominations because he wanted to make sure a new F.B.I. explosives testing facility would be located in Huntsville?

Those were the good-old days.

Now the Senate Republicans appear to be gripped by more cosmic grievances. This week, they blocked the appointment of Richard Cordray, a former Ohio attorney general, to lead the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau because they disapprove of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Which the Senate approved, with some Republican support, a year and a half ago.

The Republicans say the bureau, which has never been allowed to do anything, needs to be reined in. "I talked to the Senate historian, who said never in the history of the United States Senate has one political party tried to block the nomination of a presidential appointee based on wanting to change the agency," protested Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio during the Senate debate. To no effect whatsoever.

Also this week, the Republicans blocked Caitlin Halligan, a moderate and well-qualified nominee to the federal court, with arguments that the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals, to which Halligan was nominated, has too light a workload.

But about Aponte. The administration had, at one time, hoped to lure Senator Marco Rubio of Florida into supporting the nomination because of her backing in the Hispanic community. However, Rubio recently announced that he will not only oppose Aponte, but also the proposed new ambassador to Ecuador, and pretty much any nominee that has anything to do with the Western Hemisphere, because he disapproves of the administration's Latin America policy.

This is what is known as spreading a wide net.

Whenever these things happen, the Democrats race off to try to placate the aggrieved Republican. They gave DeMint access to Aponte's F.B.I. file, even though instances of DeMint's being placated by anything are about as frequent as confirmed sightings of space aliens.

DeMint then complained that the file was out of date. But, by then, he seemed to be losing interest in the boyfriend issue and had moved on to fuming that while she was in El Salvador, Aponte had written an op-ed essay in a Salvadoran newspaper "lecturing their

people on the need to accept and support the gay lifestyle.” Actually, Aponte praised El Salvador for signing a U.N. declaration for the elimination of violence against gays and lesbians. In response to a directive from the State Department urging ambassadors to do something in recognition of Gay Pride Month.

But, really, who’s keeping track?

The Miami Herald

Posted on Sun, Dec. 11, 2011

Politics shouldn’t deny a qualified Latina

BY ROBERT MENENDEZ

<http://menendez.senate.gov>



Republicans have stalled Mari Carmen Aponte's nomination as U.S. ambassador to El Salvador.

As I sat in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's business meeting participating in yet another discussion on the nomination of Mari Carmen Aponte to be ambassador to El Salvador, I had a real sense of déjà vu. After two years of considering Aponte's nomination, after multiple hearings and background briefings, and after agreeing to break with protocol to allow more than one Republican on the committee to examine her personal FBI file, my Republican colleagues asked for "just one more classified hearing" to fully vet her nomination.

One more hearing? Come on, let's be honest: There is no question about Ambassador Aponte's qualifications or performance on the job; this is just another case of Republican foot dragging in order to undermine the president's policy objectives.

I am especially concerned by the actions of my Senate colleagues who are willing to see this remarkable Hispanic woman sacrificed to inside-the-Beltway politics, where the political points gained from bringing down an administration nominee supersede the

value gained from having a superior ambassador in San Salvador promoting and guarding American interests.

(Mari Carmen Aponte was first nominated by President Obama to serve as U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador on Dec. 9, 2009, and was recess-appointed to that post on Aug. 19, 2010. She was re-nominated at the beginning of the 112th Congress.)

Born in Puerto Rico, Ambassador Aponte became the executive director of the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration in 2001. She has served as a director at the National Council of La Raza and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. She has presided over the Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia and the Hispanic National Bar Association.

In addition to fostering a strong U.S.-Salvadoran bilateral relationship that resulted in President Obama announcing El Salvador as one of four countries chosen to participate in the Partnership for Growth initiative, she has focused on strengthening the relationship between the U.S. and Salvadoran business communities and served as a staunch advocate for U.S. companies.

Perhaps most important, Ambassador Aponte has been an advocate for American national security and democratic values. As a result of her advocacy, El Salvador is again a key ally in Central America and its troops are the only ones from a Latin American country fighting alongside American troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan. She has consistently fought Cuba and Venezuela's efforts to gain influence in Central America and as a result of her negotiating skills, the U.S. and El Salvador will open a new, jointly-funded, electronic monitoring center that will be an invaluable tool in fighting transnational crime.

Her Republican detractors originally cited a personal relationship with a Cuban national as evidence of her unsuitability for office. When facts and files didn't corroborate these vicious allegations, they changed their tune to decry an editorial written by Ambassador Aponte on tolerance and non-violence during gay pride month as the basis for their opposition — an editorial that was ordered by the State Department and which mirrored a May 2010 decree by Salvadoran President Funes prohibiting discrimination by the government based on sexual orientation.

The shifting basis of their opposition reveals the true motive for their opposition — partisan politics, driven by partisan interests that relish their ability to derail an Administration nominee without regard to the consequences for American foreign policy.

As a lifelong proponent of democracy in Cuba and an adversary of the Cuban regime, I have never let down my guard to the subversive nature of the Castro regime, and if I had any concern that Ambassador Aponte would let her guard down, I would not be supporting her today.

I urge my colleagues to support Ambassador Aponte's nomination, put partisan politics aside, recognize the benefits to America's security and foreign policy interests that her tenure has delivered, and allow her to continue serving our nation.

Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., is a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and chairman of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere.

Read more: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/12/11/v-print/2539387/politics-shouldnt-deny-a-qualified.html#ixzz1gHaeDjsx>

Ricki Seidman
202 986 9811 office
 cell

B6