

The Huffington Post: Who Can Replace Richard Holbrooke at the Department of State?

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by David Helfenbein

Ambassador Richard Holbrooke has left a gaping hole at the U.S. Department of State. I never personally knew the man while I was there, but I certainly saw him all of the time. He was ever-present. It's funny: friends, coworkers, family, anyone who knows me will say that I am never afraid to approach anyone; Richard Holbrooke was an exception to that rule. He was a dominant figure in person. And I can see why so many people who knew him well have said that he brought an incredible amount of persuasion with his unyielding authority to the negotiating table.

I think the best person to replace Holbrooke at this time is former Secretary of State and General Colin Powell. Holbrooke's task was hard, but there is no doubt that Powell would work to finish the job. Powell is also beloved within the State Department. And he didn't leave there happy -- in this situation, he can return to work at a job different from Secretary of State, helping to restore America's reputation around the world.

How about sharing the stage with Secretary Clinton? For Clinton, this will be no problem. Do you remember when others, for example -- political pundits or other Senators -- were worried about Secretary Clinton stealing all of the limelight in the U.S. Senate? She proved all of them wrong. How about Clinton stealing all of the limelight in the Obama administration? She has proven time and time again that she cares more about results than the limelight. If she were to think that Powell would be good for the job, then she (and the President of course) would likely welcome him with open arms. And in terms of Powell, he is a military man at heart; similar to good old Ike, it is never about upstaging. It is always about getting the job done.

President Obama also needs to show bipartisanship at this time. It wouldn't be such a bad idea to bring aboard a Republican who supported you during the campaign. Of course, and really only of course, if Powell is willing to serve.

This piece is dedicated to the family of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke.

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