

Memo. Mideast good cop, bad cop. In text and attached. Sid

From: Sidney Blumenthal

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To: Hillary Clinton hr15@att.blackberry.net

Subject: Memo. Mideast good cop, bad cop. In text and attached. Sid

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NOT FOR PUBLIC USE

January 27, 2009

For: Hillary
From: Sid
Re: Good Cop, Bad Cop

1. The same sources that informed me during the campaign that Sarah Palin had been invited to the Israel rally that you were scheduled to address without telling you are now saying that the attack last week by Abe Foxman of ADL on the appointment of George Mitchell as Special Envoy to the Middle East was coordinated by Jewish institutional leaders and carefully scripted. Malcolm Hoenlein, vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, is the chief organizer. Foxman was chosen as point man to shoot the first round, but he was hardly acting alone. Foxman's remark that Mitchell is neutral and therefore suspect simply lays down a marker. Mitchell is distrusted for his previous work and statements on the issue. That he is of Arab descent, which has deliberately gone unmentioned for now but may be used later, makes him politically vulnerable, whatever his qualifications, skill or stature. (Foxman: "Sen. Mitchell is fair. He's been meticulously even-handed. But the fact

is, American policy in the Middle East hasn't been 'even handed' — it has been supportive of Israel when it felt Israel needed critical U.S. support. So I'm concerned. I'm not sure the situation requires that kind of approach in the Middle East.")

2. The same sources tell me that every one of your conversations and communications with Bibi Netanyahu flows directly and instantly back to top Jewish leadership. You should, of course, assume that nothing involving him is private. Though Livni and Barak signed on to the Gaza adventure and thought they would receive political credit, only Bibi is gaining in the aftermath. The guiding assumption must be that he will likely become the next Israeli prime minister. (See report in today's NYT: "Gaza War Gives Bigger Lift to Israel's Right Than to Those in Power, By Isabel Kirschner, Jerusalem— With two weeks to go before the Israeli elections, the politicians who seem to have benefited the most from the military offensive against Hamas in Gaza are those who were not involved in planning or carrying out the war. That is not because Israelis have regrets or have become faint-hearted about the casualties and destruction in Gaza. To the contrary, there appears to have been a shift further to the right, reflecting a feeling among many voters that an even tougher approach may now be required. Recent polls indicate that Likud, Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing opposition party, has retained and even increased its lead. The other party that appears to have gained the most ground is the nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu, led by Avigdor Lieberman.")

3. In June 1990, after Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir proposed stringent conditions for peace talks with the Palestinians intended to sabotage negotiations, Secretary of State James Baker, testifying before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, recited the White House general telephone number and said, "call us when you are serious about peace." Baker's tough stance stunned the Israelis and eventually helped pressure Shamir into the process. Baker presented himself as an honest broker and neutral party (like Mitchell), but he never recovered his full ability to operate, though his actions led to the Madrid talks that began the modern peace process. He was savaged by Jewish organizations, in the Jewish press and among the phalanx of neoconservative media. (That President George H.W. Bush's chief of staff John Sununu was of Arab descent provided a leitmotif.) To this day, despite his extraordinary effectiveness, Baker is limited in how he might ever be used in the Middle East.

4. You are always in danger of being maneuvered into Baker's position. Mitchell is even more immediately in danger. Gen. Jones, widely distrusted by Jewish leadership, is wisely keeping a very low profile, but to the extent he emerges will be in danger and targeted as Baker redux (and Scowcroft's stalking horse).

5. Bibi and the Jewish leadership should be expected to use political means, including outsourcing personal attacks, to counter moves the administration seeks in any peace process or initiating any negotiations. As you know, Bibi is deeply connected to political networks in the US—media, Jewish groups, Republican leaders, and right-wing Christian right organizations. (In 1998, Bibi tried to undermine President Clinton's peace process by meeting in the US with and mobilizing nearly every influential conservative columnist, the leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention, Jerry Falwell, Fox News, etc.)

6. In order to protect yourself and your emissaries in the diplomatic effort from the inevitably intense fire of which the Foxman incident is only a portent, you need a political heat shield. That barrier must be a person. That person should not be a diplomat (though Mitchell is already targeted and will receive incoming). That person should be organically tied to the President, invested with his authority and have an explicitly political brief. That person should be the bad cop. The bad cop must be a

political appointee, Jewish, considered the true friend of Israel, and be understood as representing the president's will. The bad cop should already have sternly rebuked Foxman to send the message back not to play with fire. The bad cop