

WHEN “MAVERICKS” CLASH

Poor McCain. He has spent so much time insinuating that Barack Obama is a traitor that he failed to fight off the traitor in his own camp.

Four Republicans close to Palin said she has decided increasingly to disregard the advice of the former Bush aides tasked to handle her, creating occasionally tense situations as she travels the country with them. Those Palin supporters, inside the campaign and out, said Palin blames her handlers for a botched rollout and a tarnished public image – even as others in McCain’s camp blame the pick of the relatively inexperienced Alaska governor, and her public performance, for McCain’s decline.

"She’s lost confidence in most of the people on the plane," said a senior Republican who speaks to Palin, referring to her campaign jet. He said Palin had begun to "go rogue" in some of her public pronouncements and decisions.

"I think she’d like to go more rogue," he said.

Aside from the delicious pleasure of yet another Republican firing squad story, this one is useful for its revelation that the neocons on McCain’s staff are trying to resuscitate Sarah Palin’s damaged image.

Palin’s loyalists say she’s grown particularly disenchanted with the veterans of the Bush reelection campaign, including Schmidt and Wallace, and that despite her anti-intellectual rhetoric, her closest ally among her new traveling aides is a policy adviser,

former National Security Council official Steve Biegun. She's also said to be close with McCain's chief foreign policy adviser, Randy Scheunemann, who prepared her for the Oct. 2 vice presidential debate.

Lovely. Ahmad Chalabi's lobbyist, Randy Scheuneman, continues to make a project of Sarah Palin. What do you think is more likely? She'll sneak out of the country in the trunk of a car after having embezzled millions? Or she'll trade code word intelligence to the Iranians?