

HILLARY SAID APPOINT A GITMO CHAMPION; THE OPPOSITE HAPPENED

There's a weird detail in this Daniel Klaidman piece on Obama's claimed newfound commitment to closing Gitmo.

One of the new details in it describes a memo Hillary Clinton wrote just before she left the State Department.

One recent plea, two sources told Newsweek, came from Hillary Clinton, who, just before she left office in January 2013, sent a two-page confidential memo to Obama about Guantánamo.

[snip]

Now, in one of her last moves as secretary of State, she was making a final effort to prod her boss to do more. Her memo was replete with practical suggestions for moving ahead on Gitmo. Chief among them: Obama needed to appoint a high-level official to be in charge of the effort, someone who had clout and proximity to the Oval Office. Further, Clinton argued that Obama could start transferring the 86 detainees who'd already been cleared for release. (Congress has imposed onerous restrictions on the administration's ability to transfer Gitmo detainees—including a stipulation that the secretary of Defense certify that detainees sent to other countries would not engage in acts of terrorism. In her memo, Clinton pointed out that the administration could use "national-security waivers" to circumvent the restriction.)

The Clinton missive perturbed White House aides, who viewed it as an attempt to put them on the spot, according to a senior administration official. It's unclear how Obama himself reacted to the memo; there's no evidence that it spurred him to action.

I thought to myself as I read this, "but Clinton's departure is precisely when the Administration moved backwards on this front, by reassigning Daniel Fried, who had been in charge of resettling detainees." Fried's reassignment was reported January 29. That was technically while Hillary was still at State – Kerry took over on February 1.

Still, whoever transferred Fried, she must have written that memo (which pissed off Obama's minders) at almost precisely the moment State eliminated the person most focused on working towards Gitmo closure.

Klaidman doesn't entirely ignore this detail. Six paragraphs later he mentions the transfer.

For much of the past few years, without any signal that Obama was going to fight on Gitmo, the policy drifted. Daniel Fried, the veteran State Department official in charge of resettling detainees, was transferred to a different position.

Still, there must be a story explaining why Fried got transferred at precisely the moment Hillary, technically still his boss, was calling to redouble the effort to close Gitmo.