

Rice Moved from U.N. to White House to Be Obama National Security Adviser

Written by Zenitha Prince

Wednesday, 12 June 2013 14:17

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President Obama on June 5 named “trusted adviser” Susan Rice as his national security adviser, defying Republican critics who had decried her handling of the attack on a U.S. embassy in Libya, that left four Americans dead. Rice will replace Tom Donilon, who retires July 1;

“I am absolutely thrilled that she’ll be back at my side leading my national security team in my second term,” Obama said of Rice, a longtime confidant, who helped frame the administration’s foreign policy in the first four years of Obama’s presidency. “Put simply, Susan exemplifies the finest tradition of American diplomacy and leadership,” the president added, speaking from the White House Rose Garden. “She is at once passionate and pragmatic.... Susan is a fierce champion for justice and human dignity, but she’s also mindful that we have to exercise our power wisely and deliberately.”

The White House shakeup could reflect a shift in Obama’s foreign policy toward more human rights issues.

At the UN, Rice has advocated on behalf of innocent civilians from Libya to Cote d’Ivoire and “raised her voice” for human rights, Obama said.

Of Power, who works closely with Rice, the president said, “She has been a relentless advocate for American interests and values, building partnerships on behalf of democracy and human rights, fighting the scourge of anti-Semitism and combatting human trafficking” among other causes.

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“I’m deeply honored and humbled to serve our country as your national security adviser,” Rice told the president. “And I’m deeply grateful for your enduring confidence in me.” The latter comment could be a nod to the firestorm of controversy that erupted over Rice’s explanation for the 2012 Benghazi embassy attack, which Republicans used to derail Rice’s nomination for secretary of state. Congress has no vetting power in the appointment of a national security adviser, but some Republicans voiced their dissatisfaction anyway.

“Susan Rice was complicit in the deception the administration perpetrated after the attack on our diplomatic facilities in Libya,” said Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, in a statement. “Since that time she has done nothing new that would improve or enhance her qualifications to hold such an important diplomatic and national security position within any administration. I am troubled that the President has avoided the confirmation process to promote a friend who has already been deemed unfit for service and I am concerned about the potential negative impact on national security.”

Others seemed more resigned.

“Obviously I disagree [with Obama’s] appointment of Susan Rice as Nat’l Security Adviser, but I’ll make every effort to work with her on important issues,” Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said on Twitter.