

Corker: White House Foreign Policy Meeting 'Bizarre'

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I've never heard of a U.S. senator meeting with senior White House officials and then afterward calling the session "bizarre."

Obama football 3But that's what Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, the top Republican member of the Senate Foreign Policy Committee, termed a secret gathering Tuesday night that that included 14 senators - 11 Democrats, three Republicans - who met with White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough and National Security Advisor Susan Rice.

“I know we both attended sort of a discussion last night that I found to be one of the most bizarre I’ve attended on Foreign Relations on foreign policy in our country,” Corker said, referring to himself and Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), the committee’s chairman.

He didn’t say why it was bizarre, but based on some reporting by the Associated Press and my knowledge of how White Houses usually operate – and this one in particular – I know exactly what he meant.

First of all, the President Obama didn’t even drop by. You have the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee in the West Wing for what was, I’m sure, a very rare trip to the White House, and he doesn’t even see the president.

This is the only White House I’ve covered where senior senators go to the West Wing to meet with staff, not the president. The White House thinks it’s repairing relations with Congress – finally – but it’s actually insulting lawmakers instead.

Remember what a big deal the White House made about a dinner Obama staged with some Republicans a year ago? Typical Obama. A one-shot effort, with no follow up.

What’s more, Tuesday’s discussion, over wine, beer, and a cheese and cracker platter on the patio outside of McDonough’s office, appears to have been a sophomoric hand-holding session in which the senators were treated to little beyond the crackers and cheese.

According to the AP:

Another senator who attended the meeting said Obama’s advisers refused to provide lawmakers with answers about whether the president plans to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan after the war formally concludes later this year or about the Pentagon’s efforts to find nearly 300 kidnapped Nigerian school girls.

I’m sure they just sat there in disbelief as Rice and McDonough refused to tell them anything, and then started wondering what they were doing there.

Eventually, senators just started leaving, EVEN BEFORE THE MEETING WAS OVER.

I’ve never heard of that either, unless there was some urgent matter or a vote on Capitol Hill. You don’t otherwise leave a White House meeting unless you are really either being disrespected or getting nothing of value out of it.

Such ham-handedness. Brought to you by the same people who brought you Healthcare.gov.

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