**Backstabbing 101**

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Last week in response to a story by The Weekly Standard's William Kristol, the Obama administration denied it was busy stabbing Israel in the back on the issue of how to investigate the Turkish-backed campaign to break the Gaza naval blockade.

On Tuesday, however, Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian representative to the United Nations, and a spokesman for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, suggested the backstabbing was indeed in high gear.

Mansour was speaking at a press stakeout at U.N. headquarters outside a Security Council session on the situation in the Middle East. He was asked about U.S. approval of a U.N.-sponsored investigation in light of Israel having launched its own investigation on Monday. Mansour responded:

“We support the Secretary General’s decision to proceed with his idea of having an international investigation under his auspices and we know that there is no objection to the effort of the S.G. in this regard inside the Security Council.”

The Secretary-General’s move to discredit the Israeli investigation was confirmed a few minutes later by Robert Serry, U.N. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Secretary-General’s Personal Representative to the Palestinian Authority. Serry told reporters that the Secretary-General has not dropped the idea of launching his own investigation.

Serry released a statement which reads:

“The Secretary-General...has proposed an international panel, one that is under the aegis of a third party seen as impartial...The Secretary-General has taken note of Israel’s announcement and recognizes that a thorough Israeli investigation is important, and could be consistent with the Secretary-General’s own proposals for an international panel – the two combined would fully meet the international community’s expectation for a credible and impartial investigation. The Secretary-General’s proposal is not incompatible with domestic inquiries, in fact, the two approaches are complementary, so his proposal, accordingly, remains on the table.”

Israel’s new investigative team is unprecedented in light of its inclusion of two international observers on a subject at the heart of the country’s national security and sovereign right of self-defense. The decision to include international observers was immediately subject to internal criticism from some of Israel’s leading international law jurists.

But Israel made the move in response to enormous pressure from the Obama administration. The president himself lectured Israel about “international standards,” while Secretary Clinton linked credibility to “international participation.” Neither of them cared a whit that such an investigation into the American military in the midst of a war would be dismissed out of hand, as would a suggestion that the American constitution was a pale substitute for the U.N.’s idea of human rights.

Nevertheless, after Israel made the difficult decision to include international participants, the administration responded with another stab in the back.

Back on May 31 the Security Council had issued a Presidential Statement, with American approval, calling “for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards.”

But on Monday following the Israeli announcement, Assistant Secretary of State, Philip Crowley told reporters that the Israeli investigation was merely “an important step forward.” Most significantly, Crowley refused to respond in the affirmative to the central question of whether, in the administration’s view, the Israeli investigation satisfied the Security Council’s call. He would only say: “we’re not going to prejudge the process or the outcome… [W]hat Israel announced yesterday is a step in that direction.”

By supporting the Security Council statement in unprecedented haste with few facts, and by now refusing to indicate that the Israeli investigation satisfies the Council’s demand, the Obama administration is encouraging the U.N.-driven assault.

On June 1, the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva launched a so-called “independent international fact finding mission” – with a mandate to report on what they had already decided was Israel’s “outrageous attack.”

Though the administration eventually voted against the resolution, it has done nothing to remove its standing pledge of substantial financial support for the investigation and everything else the Council does.

At the same time, the U.N. Secretary-General jumped in with his own idea for an international commission of inquiry headed by a person of his choosing.

Although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rightly rejected the idea as a gross interference in Israeli sovereignty, evidently President Obama has refused to insist that Ban Ki-moon take it off the table.

Instead, despite Israel’s investigation and its international participants, none of the U.N. players have backed off – and neither has the Obama administration. Backstabbing 101.