



POGO on Segment of CNN's "Newsnight with Aaron Brown"

Aaron Brown, Anderson Cooper, Joe Johns

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COOPER: Coming up tonight, charges of cronyism in the White House. The latest linked to the nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court. A look at the potential political fallout.

Plus, believe it or not, some New Yorkers actually found out about last week's terror threat before New York's mayor did. How did that happen? A leak within Homeland Security. That story when NEWSNIGHT returns.

COOPER: We're talking about New Orleans a lot tonight. On to Washington now and all the noise over Supreme Court Nominee Harriet Miers. The White House today said that Miers won't succumb to conservative criticism and withdraw her nomination. It says anyone who knows her credentials would not even suggest such a thing.

President Bush, of course, knows her credentials very well, since she's a friend of his. To some, that of course, is the problem. And they say Miers is nothing more than a crony.

But is that really a big deal? CNN Congressional Correspondent Joe Johns looks into it.

JOE JOHNS, CNN CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT: The word crony, essentially means old friend. Nothing wrong with that unless old friends, with questionable credentials get hired to protect the public.

Ex-FEMA Chief Michael Brown triggered all this when he lost his job and critics blamed him for botching the federal response to Hurricane Katrina.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NANCY PELOSKI, REPRESENTATIVE, HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADER: Meanwhile the Katrina response remains plagued by cronyism -- cronyism that gives jobs to the friends of the Bush administration, without qualifications for those jobs.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JOHNS: Now political appointees are taking a lot of flack. And the president's pick for Supreme Court, Harriet Miers, has even been tagged with a crony label.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Harriet, thank you for agreeing to serve. Congratulations.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JOHNS: But there's nothing new about putting your friends in top jobs. John F. Kennedy put his brother in charge of the Justice Department. Bill Clinton handed healthcare policy to his wife. And some say there's nothing wrong with it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You do not want to undercut the ability of a president to do his job or undercut the ability of the president to carry out his agenda. **JOHNS:** But what about some of these people being put in positions that affect public safety? And if they're incompetent, there could be a negative effect on public safety.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You're absolutely right. And the good news is if somebody in fact is not doing a good job as a political appointee, you can get rid of them immediately.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JOHNS: On the Democratic watch list right now, several appointees, including two at the Department of Homeland Security. Julie Myers, a former federal prosecutor and Treasury Department official is married to the chief of staff at the DHS. And she's the niece of former Joint Chiefs Chairman Richard Myers. Most recently, she ran a division of the Commerce Department with a \$25 million budget and fewer than 200 employees.

Myers has now been nominated to head DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Division with a budget of \$4 billion and 20,000 employees.

Andrew Maner, one time press and travel aide to the first President Bush; most recently, a deputy at the U.S. Customs Office, another division of DHS. Now he's chief financial officer of the entire department, with a budget of \$40 billion.

Beth Daley (ph) works for the Project On Government Oversight. She keeps in close contact with career civil servants and she's hearing a lot of complaints.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BETH DALEY (ph), Project On Government Oversight: There's a pattern to some of the stories that we're getting, which is that political appointees come into an agency. They reorganize it. They fire some people and then they hire their friends.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JOHNS: It's a system that rewards the winners and schmoozers in politics. Sometimes in Washington, it's not your resume that counts. It's who you know. Joe Johns, CNN, Washington.