

## Hillary Clinton 'to be U.S. foreign chief': Obama poised to pick his former rival after 'secret Chicago meeting'

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Hillary Clinton was being tipped last night for a top job in Barack Obama's Cabinet as America's next Secretary of State.

The surprise move is being seen in Washington as an attempt to heal the rift in the Democratic Party caused by the hard-fought battle for the presidential nomination earlier this year.

Meanwhile Obama has named his longtime friend and supporter Valerie Jarrett to be his White House senior adviser - the role currently held by Karl Rove in President Bush's administration.

Friends again? Senator Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama campaigning in Florida before he won the election - she has emerged as a candidate to be America's next Secretary of State Jarrett, who hired Michelle Obama for a job in the Chicago mayor's office years ago, is one of the President-elect's closest friends and advisers.

By making former First Lady Hillary Clinton his top diplomat, the President-elect would be rewarding his one-time rival for standing by him in his White House campaign against Republican John McCain.

Speculation that Mrs Clinton will succeed Condoleezza Rice in the State Department grew after she flew for a on Thursday with Mr Obama in Chicago, where he has been cloistered with his advisers for most of the week choosing his first administration.

Aides confirmed Mrs Clinton topped Mr Obama's list for the key job.

The President-elect's team was remaining tight-lipped about any appointments yesterday, but Mrs Clinton refused to rule out a top job earlier this week, saying: 'I want to be a good partner and I want to do everything I can to make sure his agenda is going to be successful.'

It was a far cry from the battle in the Democrat primaries when Mrs Clinton, 61, hammered Mr Obama over his lack of experience.

Mrs Clinton was accused of trying to smear her opponent by bringing up his associations with fiery preacher Reverend Jeremiah Wright and domestic terrorist Bill Ayers.

Mrs Clinton's millions of supporters were also angered by Mr Obama's decision to pass over

her in favour of Joe Biden as his vice presidential running mate.

During the primaries, Mr Obama blasted Mrs Clinton for pretending to play a more important role in her husband's foreign affairs and mocked her for saying she came under fire from snipers in Bosnia when it emerged that was not the case.

But the Democrat rivals mended fences and during the party convention in August, she declared: 'Barack Obama is my candidate and he must be our president.'

Obama is also said to be reaching across the partisan divide to meet with John McCain on Monday Mr Obama even smoothed the ruffled feathers of former President Bill Clinton, who went on to campaign for him around the country.

Mrs Clinton's selection as Secretary of State could mean a more hawkish foreign policy than that advocated by Mr Obama during his presidential campaign.

They clashed over his promises that he would meet leaders of countries such as Iran and Syria without insisting on preconditions.

Mrs Clinton was also more reluctant than Mr Obama to commit to a firm timetable for withdrawing U.S. forces from Iraq.

However, both were adamant about improving the image of the United States abroad and correcting what they considered the 'failed policies' of the outgoing Bush administration.

Although some pundits suggest Mrs Clinton still has her eyes on the White House, Mr Obama's emphatic victory over Mr McCain could stand him in good stead in the 2012 election, effectively putting the presidency out of reach for her.

As part of his bid to move on from the sometimes bitter divisions of the campaign trail, Mr Obama also plans to meet Mr McCain on Monday to talk about ways they can work together.

It will be the first time the two have spoken since Mr McCain called to concede the election.

The losing Republican candidate promised to help his former rival address the country's many challenges.

Mr Obama's transition spokesman, Stephanie Cutter, said: 'It's well known that they share an important belief that Americans want and deserve a more effective and efficient government, and will discuss ways to work together to make that a reality.'

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