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## Inept Envoy Clouded View of Morocco

Presidents have been rewarding political allies with ambassadorships practically since the birth of the republic—to the occasional embarrassment of the United States, but only rarely with any serious harm to its foreign policy.

A political appointee's ignorance of his duties is usually outweighed by the diplomatic skill of his underlings, and his access to the president can compensate for a wealth of incompetence.

But something went wrong with the traditional safeguards when Joseph Werner Reed set out on the road to Morocco in 1981.

The result was a strategic disaster for the Reagan administration: the astonishing union of a supposedly staunch U.S. ally, Morocco, with the virulently anti-American dictatorship of Libya.

It would be unfair to lay the Morocco-Libyan rapprochement solely at Reed's door. The Central Intelligence Agency is still trying to figure out what happened, and will have some hard questions to answer before outraged congressional committees.

But Reed can certainly bear a large share of the blame for the White House's failure to learn what was in the works until it was too late for anything but hand-wringing. Though the Libyans had been courting King Hassan of Morocco for over a year, Reed was so confident of his friendship with Hassan that he discounted evidence that the king might not be completely loyal to the United States.

It was a measure of Reed's detachment that he was vacationing in Maine when Morocco's "friendship treaty" with Libya was announced. Old hands in Foggy Bottom and on Capitol Hill weren't surprised that Reed was, literally, so far out of it.

Reed has admitted, in conversations with irate members of Congress, that his old buddy Hassan informed him of the treaty with Libya only an hour before the monarch announced it to the rest of the world. For years the ambassador had assured anyone within earshot that he had "unprecedented" access to Hassan and his inner circle.

Reed's behavior was based on his confidence that his close relationship with Hassan ensured U.S.-Moroccan solidarity. Reed once had the sentry boxes outside his Rabat residence painted red, white and blue, and named the house Villa America. When the Moroccan prime minister had tea with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee here, Reed unfurled a large banner to welcome him.

In fact, Reed suffered from a severe case of "clientitis." He sang Hassan's praises to Congress and the White House. He helped engineer an intelligence-sharing agreement with Morocco that gave Hassan information that U.S. spy satellites had picked up on the Polisario rebels in the disputed western Sahara war. This agreement and several others are now under review.

For all his claimed intimacy with the Moroccans, Reed is often ridiculed by them, State Department sources told my associate Lucette Lagnado. This opinion was shared by Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton (D-Mo.), who referred to Reed after a 1982 visit to Morocco as "a 14-karat nitwit."

An ambassador is supposed to be the president's eyes and ears, as well as the mouthpiece for administration views. Once again, a president has been hamstrung by having an unprofessional ambassador in a sensitive foreign embassy.