

An exasperated McCain has been telling friends in recent weeks that Palin is even more trouble than a pitbull.

In one joke doing the rounds, the Republican presidential candidate has been asking friends: what is the difference between Sarah Palin and a pitbull? The friendly canine eventually lets go, is the McCain punchline.

We owe the new glimpse into the tense McCain/Palin relationship to Sir Nigel Sheinwald, the British ambassador to Washington. Sheinwald recently wrote a lengthy assessment of McCain in a telegram that winged its way across the Atlantic to Whitehall.

The jaws of senior mandarins dropped when they read Sheinwald's account of McCain's thoughts on Palin which the ambassador reportedly picked up from a military friend of McCain's. The telegram was restricted to an even smaller group of people than usual for fear of another embarrassing leak. "We took one look at this and hid it away," one Whitehall source said.

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