

= The Masked Avengers ' prank on Sarah Palin =

On November 1 , 2008 , American vice @-@ presidential candidate Sarah Palin fell victim to a prank call by the Masked Avengers , a Quebecer radio comedy duo , who tricked Palin into believing she was talking to French President Nicolas Sarkozy . During the conversation , the fake Sarkozy , speaking in English (the real Sarkozy does not speak English) , talked to Palin about foreign policy , hunting , and the 2008 U.S. presidential election . After it was revealed to Palin that the call was a prank , she handed the phone to one of her assistants who told the comedy duo " I have to let you go " and hung up .

Both the McCain and Obama campaigns released light @-@ hearted statements about the prank . However , a McCain campaign advisor said that behind the scenes , aides and advisors to the campaign were not happy that the pranksters were able to lie their way up to Palin , or with the publicity Palin received because of the call .

= = Background = =

The Masked Avengers , a Canadian radio duo from Montreal , Quebec radio station CKOI @-@ FM , had become notorious for making prank calls to celebrities . Disc jockeys and comedians Sébastien Trudel and Marc @-@ Antoine Audette had previously pranked celebrities like business mogul Bill Gates , golfer Tiger Woods , singer Britney Spears , and French president Nicolas Sarkozy .

Sarah Palin was the Republican governor of Alaska . On August 29 , 2008 , John McCain announced that she would be his running mate in the 2008 presidential election against Democrats Barack Obama and Joe Biden . Critics of Palin voiced their concern what they saw as her lack of foreign policy experience , especially after an interview with Katie Couric of the CBS Evening News where Palin was criticized by many for her answer to a question about her " foreign policy credentials " .

= = Preparation = =

Marc @-@ Antoine Audette said that it took the duo about four or five days of calls to Palin 's staff to finally be able to talk to her . They claimed that they started by talking to low @-@ level people in Alaska and made their way up through Palin 's campaign staff . Audette said that at first they didn 't think their prank would work , calling it a " mission impossible " . He claimed that " after about a dozen calls " , the duo " started to realize it [the prank call] might work , because her [Sarah Palin 's] staff didn 't know the name of the French President . They asked us to spell it . " Audette and Trudel credited their ability to make their way up through Palin 's staff to sounding convincing during the first few calls , always arranging to place the call at a set time , and not leaving a contact number . The four days of calls needed to talk to Palin was quicker compared to some of their other pranks . Audette and Trudel said that it took them two months to talk to Paul McCartney and one to talk to Bill Gates , but only two days to prank Britney Spears .

= = Conversation = =

Finally , on November 1 , the Masked Avengers were able to talk to Palin . The call began with Trudel , who claimed to be an aide to Sarkozy named " Frank l ? ouvrier " , talking to an assistant to Palin who identifies herself as " Lexi " . Lexi puts Palin on the line , who says " hello " only to realize that Trudel is still on the other line . Trudel tells Palin to hold on for a moment while he gives the phone to Sarkozy , who is really Audette . Palin can be heard talking to someone in the room about when to hand Palin the phone . Audette then begins to speak and a somewhat extended conversation ensues .

After Audette reveals that the call was a prank by CKOI in Montreal , Palin leaves the phone and can be heard in the background telling her aides that the call was " just a radio station prank " .

Audette is still on the line and jokes that " if one voice can change the world for Obama , one Viagra can change the world for McCain . " One of Palin 's assistants picks up the phone and says " I ? m sorry , I have to let you go . Thank you . "

= = Reaction = =

In an e @-@ mail , Palin spokeswoman Tracey Schmitt wrote that " Governor Palin was mildly amused to learn that she had joined the ranks of heads of state , including President Sarkozy , and other celebrities in being targeted by these pranksters . C 'est la vie . " When asked by reporters about the conversation , Palin said that she would " keep a sense of humor through all of this , just as we [the McCain campaign] did with SNL [parodies of her] , too . " She added that " you 've got to have some levity in all this . "

Barack Obama senior advisor Robert Gibbs jokingly said in an interview that " I 'm glad we [the Obama campaign] check out our calls before we hand the phone to Barack Obama . "

The Masked Avengers received a sudden burst of fame from the prank . They gave more than 300 interviews about the conversation , and were even flown to New York City by CBS to appear on The Early Show . In an interview , Marc @-@ Antoine Audette and Sébastien Trudel said that they found it " pretty disturbing to see that idiots like us can go through to a vice @-@ presidential candidate " , and claimed that they were just " two stupid comedians with a bad French accent . " The Masked Avengers also admitted that the call was " probably the biggest [prank] we 've ever done . "

When recalling the experience , Audette said that " once we [Audette and Trudel] started making jokes , she didn 't seem to mind , and she didn 't seem to be aware of the fact we were making jokes " , which according to Audette was when " we were like ' Oh my God this [call] is gonna be long ' " . The duo also said that they weren 't trying to make any political statements with the call , they just like to take high @-@ profile people to task .

= = Impact = =

After McCain and Palin were defeated in the general election , a Republican campaign advisor told The New York Times that the McCain Campaign was not happy about the prank , which caused friction between McCain and Palin . McCain and his advisors were allegedly upset that Palin did not tell them beforehand that she planned to speak with who she thought was Nicolas Sarkozy . McCain strategist Steve Schmidt called a meeting and demanded to know who let Palin talk to the fake Sarkozy without checking with senior advisors first . Steve Biegun , one of Palin 's aides admitting to vetting the call without speaking to campaign advisors or the U.S. State Department , told the Los Angeles Times that " No one 's going to beat me up more than I beat myself up for setting up the governor like that . "