

Cheney's 'Shadow Government' Comes Into the Sunlight

by Edward Spannaus

All the trees in the forest have not yet fallen—to use the famous Watergate analogy—but they are beginning to shake. And as they do, the secret “shadow government” operating under the direction of Vice President Dick Cheney and centered in the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans (OSP)—the driving force for war with Iraq and other countries—is coming out into the light.

Over the weekend of June 6-8, *EIR* founder and Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche issued a widely circulated statement charging that the growing mountain of evidence showing that Cheney had repeatedly used a forged document to corral Congressional and public support for the Iraq War, constituted grounds for the impeachment of the Vice President. The document in question was the now-famous forgery, purporting to show that Iraq had attempted to purchase uranium ore “yellowcake” from Niger.

Since LaRouche issued his demand that Cheney, and not President Bush, must be the target, the attention to Cheney’s role in the intelligence fiasco leading into the war has heightened, so that as of this writing, the momentum is building to the point at which heads are likely to roll in the coming days and weeks.

Tenet ‘Admission’ Backfires

Any hope that Cheney and his defenders might have had, that by forcing CIA Director George Tenet to fall on his sword and take the blame—for failing to stop the White House from including the fraudulent Niger story in the President’s State of the Union Address—they could somehow shut down the scandal, rapidly evaporated in the days following Tenet’s July 11 statement. All that Tenet’s admission did, was to focus attention on the question of *who* in the White House wanted to override the CIA and include the Niger fable.

Exemplary of the growing focus on Cheney, in just the few days following Tenet’s statements, are the following items:

July 13:

- Maureen Dowd, in her *Sunday New York Times* column, noted that the line about the Niger story only got into the State of the Union speech over the CIA’s objections, because “a higher power wanted it in.”

“And that had to be Dick Cheney’s office,” Dowd concluded, noting that former Ambassador Joseph Wilson was sent to Niger to investigate the Iraq claim by the CIA, in response to questions raised by Cheney’s office.

- The *Washington Post* reported, in a front-page story: “Administration sources said White House officials, particularly those in the office of Vice President Cheney, insisted on



Since Lyndon LaRouche issued his call for the impeachment of Vice President Dick Cheney six weeks ago, the attention to Cheney’s role in the intelligence fiasco leading to the Iraq War has heightened, to the point that heads are very likely to roll.



At this press briefing held by Rep. Dennis Kucinich in Washington on July 15, intelligence professionals, including notably Ray McGovern (inset) of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), highlighted Dick Cheney's culpability for the insertion of lies about Niger "yellowcake" uranium into the President's State of the Union speech, and called for Cheney's resignation.

including Hussein's quest for a nuclear weapon as a prominent part of their public case for war in Iraq. Cheney had made the potential threat of Hussein having a nuclear weapon a central theme of his August 2002 speeches that began the public buildup toward war with Baghdad."

July 14:

- In a *Newsweek Online* column, Eleanor Clift wrote: "CIA director George Tenet sent [Joseph] Wilson to Niger after Vice President Cheney asked for an investigation. Wilson asks why Cheney's office would demand this inquiry and not want to know the result. If Bush really was misled, wouldn't he want to know who embarrassed him? Who made him a liar? In a White House as obsessed with loyalty as this one, the fact that no heads rolled strongly indicates this could go all the way to Cheney, if not to Bush himself. Who knows how much Cheney tells the boss. Bush is not a detail guy. He may not have wanted to know."

- The London *Guardian* wrote: "Fingers were also pointed at the vice-president, Dick Cheney, who was allegedly obsessed with proving his repeated claims last August that Saddam was actively pursuing a nuclear program. . . . According to his chief of staff, Lewis Libby, Mr. Cheney had taken an interest in an Italian intelligence report in late 2001 about Iraqi attempts to buy uranium in Niger."

- *Time* magazine noted that when the Italian report on Niger yellowcake got to Washington, it "caught the eye of someone important: Vice President Dick Cheney."

"Cheney's interest hardly came as a surprise," *Time* said, explaining that "he has long been known to harbor some of

the most hard-line views of Saddam's nuclear ambitions."

- *USA Today* reported that George Tenet is being pushed toward "walking the plank," and suggested that Vice President Cheney's office is in the lead among those pushing for Tenet's ouster, citing a number of reasons why Cheney's office is angry at the CIA Director.

- The group of retired intelligence officers known as Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) called upon President Bush to ask for Cheney's immediate resignation, telling the President that Cheney's role has been so transparent that further attempts to cover it up, "will only erode further your own credibility." (See *Documentation*.)

July 15:

- *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristoff featured the VIPS statement, saying that it reflects the view of many in the intelligence community "that the central culprit is Vice President Dick Cheney."

- Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) sent a letter to the leadership of the House Intelligence Committee, highlighting reports that the forged Niger documents had been first given to Vice President Cheney's office in early 2002, and demanding that a number of agencies and offices, including Cheney's, be thoroughly investigated for abuse of intelligence.

- Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), in a statement on the Senate floor about the yellowcake matter and other dubious claims about Iraq's alleged nuclear capability, posed a series of questions which need answers, including the role of the Office of the Vice President in triggering the mission of former Ambassador Wilson to Niger, and whether Cheney's staff was

briefed on the results of the Wilson mission.

- Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) held a Congressional briefing in a hearing room packed with reporters and cameras, featuring VIPS spokesman Ray McGovern, and Andrew Wilkie, a senior intelligence analyst for Australia's Office of National Assessments, who had resigned on March 11, 2003, to protest the way intelligence was misused to justify Australia's support for war on Iraq.

Kucinich asked a series of questions to McGovern, who had been a CIA briefing officer for Vice President George H.W. Bush during the 1980s, such as: Is it possible that Vice President Cheney was never told about the Wilson mission to Niger? "That's an easy one," McGovern answered. "It is not possible." McGovern then pointed out that Cheney had "led the charge" for war last Summer, using disinformation and the "mushroom cloud scare" to frighten Congress into giving the President the authority to go to war against Iraq.

Kucinich also asked McGovern, if it were possible that someone like former Ambassador Wilson could be sent to Niger at the initiative of the Vice President, and then the Vice President would not have been told the result? McGovern said that this would go through National Security Council (NSC) channels, adding: "When a Vice President has a question, as certain as night follows day, he gets an answer."

Kucinich also asked McGovern if he had ever known of a Vice President making regular visits to the CIA, standing over analysts as they do their work? "Never," he answered.

During the question period, *EIR* asked McGovern to elaborate on the VIPS recommendation to President Bush that he call upon Vice President Cheney to resign, noting that Lyndon LaRouche had called six weeks ago for Cheney to be impeached.

McGovern answered, "If you read our statement, it's very clear that the Vice President spearheaded the push for war. If you look at Cheney's speeches, he is way out ahead of other American statesmen and officials in saying that Saddam Hussein has a nuclear capability," citing as an example Cheney's March 16 television appearance in which he stated that Saddam "has reconstituted nuclear weapons."

July 16:

- The London *Independent's* lead story was headlined: "Cheney Under Pressure to Quit Over False War Evidence," reporting that calls for Cheney's resignation were coming from a number of quarters, including the VIPS organization.

Tenet Fingers a 'Mole'

It was also on July 16, that George Tenet and another senior CIA official, Alan Foley, testified in a closed-door session of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Their appearance also marked a turning-point, in shifting the Committee's focus from the role of the CIA, to the question of who within the White House had pressed for the inclusion of the fraudulent Niger story in the State of the Union speech.

It was reported that Tenet and Foley had, under intense

questioning, named Dr. Robert Joseph, the Director of Non-proliferation for the National Security Council, as the staff-level official who insisted on retaining the discredited Niger canard in the President's speech. Following the Committee session, its chairman, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) indicated for the first time, that the Committee will broaden its focus, to "follow the trail wherever it may lead," and he suggested that he may call White House officials in for questioning. "We'll let the chips fall where they may," Roberts declared.

The identification of Robert Joseph in an official hearing is quite significant. (Joseph had already been identified in a number of press accounts, as having been engaged in a dispute with CIA officer Foley over the Niger statement.)

EIR had published a profile of Joseph back in April 2001, exposing him as a "plant" in the NSC for leading neo-con warhawk Richard Perle, the discredited former chairman of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board. During the Reagan Administration, Joseph worked under Perle and Frank Gaffney in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He now sits on the Advisory Board of Gaffney's Center for Security Policy, one of the major "chicken-hawk" nests in Washington.

Cheney's 'Shadow' Spy agency

EIR has recently been provided with new details, by several high-level U.S. intelligence sources, regarding the role of Cheney in the rogue intelligence operations run out of the Pentagon in the United States, and out of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office in Israel—operations designed to circumvent established intelligence agencies such as the U.S. CIA and DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), and Israel's Mossad.

Cheney's office learned of the existence of the Niger documents from Sharon's office in Israel, probably through the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, *EIR* was told. By late 2001, Cheney and his national security adviser and chief of staff Lewis "Scooter" Libby, were making regular trips to CIA headquarters to press for followup to the Niger story.

EIR has for some time been aware of a major Israeli component to the Pentagon OSP operation. Two sources have now separately confirmed that there is a parallel office to the OSP, situated in Prime Minister Sharon's office. Both units were created in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, for the purpose of bypassing their respective nation's traditional intelligence agencies. The Israeli Mossad reportedly refused to participate in this game, not wishing to jeopardize its long-standing relations with U.S. and other intelligence services. The Mossad, as a professional intelligence institution, also disapproves of much of what Sharon is currently doing.

The OSP, as we have previously reported, is run under the direction of Doug Feith and Paul Wolfowitz, by Abram Shulsky, an avowed follower of the late fascist philosopher Leo Strauss, and the fanatical William Luti, a former aide to Cheney.

Shortly after *EIR* had received the above-cited reports, the online edition of the London *Guardian* published a bombshell

account of the Pentagon's "shadow intelligence agency," the OSP, on July 17, which coheres with these reports, as well as with *EIR*'s extensive coverage of the OSP over the recent months. *Guardian* investigative reporter Julian Borger reported that senior officials in the Bush Administration have created "a shadow agency of Pentagon analysts staffed mainly by ideological amateurs" to compete with the CIA and DIA, and that it operates "under the patronage of hardline conservatives in the top rungs of the administration, the Pentagon and at the White House, including Vice President Dick Cheney."

"The president's most trusted adviser, Mr. Cheney, was at the shadow network's sharp end." The shadow agency operates "off the official payroll and beyond Congressional oversight," Borger wrote. "He [Cheney] made several trips to the CIA in Langley, Virginia, to demand a more 'forward-leaning' interpretation of the threat posed by Saddam. When he was not there to make his influence felt, his chief of staff, Lewis 'Scooter' Libby, was. Such hands-on involvement in the processing of intelligence data was unprecedented for a vice-president in recent times, and it put pressure on CIA officials to come up with the appropriate results."

Borger describes the OSP as "an open and largely unfiltered conduit to the White House" for both Iraqi opposition groups such as Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress, and the "parallel, ad hoc intelligence operation inside Ariel Sharon's office," which provided the Bush Administration "with more alarmist reports on Saddam's Iraq than Mossad was prepared to authorize." Borger notes that this represented a continuation of the long-standing relationship that Feith and other Washington neo-cons have with the Israeli right-wing Likud Party.

The *Guardian* also reports that the OSP's "primary customers" are Cheney, Libby, and their closest ally on the NSC staff, Stephen Hadley, the deputy to National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice.

Even though the rogue OSP has been operating without Congressional oversight, that may soon change. The senior Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.), is looking into the OSP, and has made a formal "survey and investigation" request to the Appropriations Committee which could trigger an inquiry by the Committee's investigative arm. "That office [OSP] was charged with collecting, vetting and disseminating intelligence completely outside of the normal intelligence apparatus," Obey says, adding that its information was not shared with the regular intelligence agencies, and that it "was passed on to the National Security Council and the President without having been vetted with anyone other than political appointees."

The noose is now tightening around this small, sinister cabal, that has captured the President and planned the Iraq War, and other imperial adventures. The sooner Cheney and this apparatus are cleaned out, the sooner the nation can get back on track to deal with the genuine problems facing us: most urgently, the global economic and financial breakdown.

Documentation

'Your Vice President Led The Campaign of Deceit

July 14, 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR: The President

FROM: Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity

SUBJECT: Intelligence Unglued

The glue that holds the Intelligence Community together is melting under the hot lights of an awakened press. If you do not act quickly, your intelligence capability will fall apart—with grave consequences for the nation.

The Forgery Flap

By now you are all too familiar with the play-by-play. The Iraq-seeking-uranium-in-Niger forgery is a microcosm of a mischievous nexus of overarching problems. Instead of addressing these problems, your senior staff is alternately covering up for one another and gently stabbing one another in the back. CIA Director George Tenet's extracted, unapologetic apology on July 11 was classic—I confess; she did it. . . .

The Vice President's Role

Attempts at cover-up could easily be seen as comical, were the issue not so serious. Highly revealing were Ari Fleisher's remarks early last week, which set the tone for what followed. When asked about the forgery, he noted tellingly—as if drawing on well memorized talking points—that the Vice President was not guilty of anything. The disingenuousness was capped on Friday, when George Tenet did his awkward best to absolve the Vice President from responsibility.

To those of us who experienced Watergate, these comments had an eerie ring. That affair and others since have proven that cover-up can assume proportions overshadowing the crime itself. All the more reason to take early action to get the truth up and out.

There is just too much evidence that Ambassador Wilson was sent to Niger at the behest of Vice President Cheney's office, and that Wilson's findings were duly reported not only to that office but to others as well.

Equally important, it was Cheney who launched (in a major speech on August 26, 2002) the concerted campaign to persuade Congress and the American people that Saddam Hussein was about to get his hands on nuclear weapons—a campaign that mushroomed, literally, in early October with you and your senior advisers raising the specter of a "mushroom cloud" being the first "smoking gun" we might observe.

That this campaign was based largely on information

known to be forged and that the campaign was used successfully to frighten our elected representatives in Congress into voting for war is clear from the bitter protestations of Rep. Henry Waxman and others. The politically aware recognize that the same information was used, also successfully, in the campaign leading up to the mid-term elections—a reality that breeds a cynicism highly corrosive to our political process.

The fact that the forgery also crept into your state-of-the-union address pales in significance in comparison with how it was used to deceive Congress into voting on October 11 to authorize you to make war on Iraq.

It was a deep insult to the integrity of the intelligence process that, after the Vice President declared on August 26, 2002 that “we know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons,” the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) produced during the critical month of September featured a fraudulent conclusion that “most analysts” agreed with Cheney’s assertion. This may help explain the anomaly of Cheney’s unprecedented “multiple visits” to CIA headquarters at the time, as well as the many reports that CIA and other intelligence analysts were feeling extraordinarily great pressure, accompanied by all manner of intimidation tactics, to concur in that conclusion. As a coda to his nuclear argument, Cheney told NBC’s Meet the Press three days before US/UK forces invaded Iraq: “we believe he [Saddam Hussein] has reconstituted nuclear weapons.”

Mr. Russert: . . . the International Atomic Energy Agency said he does not have a nuclear program; we disagree?

Vice President Cheney: I disagree, yes. And you’ll find the CIA, for example, and other key parts of the intelligence community disagree . . . we know he has been absolutely devoted to trying to acquire nuclear weapons. And we believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons. I think Mr. ElBaradei [Director of the IAEA] frankly is wrong.

Contrary to what Cheney and the NIE said, the most knowledgeable analysts—those who know Iraq and nuclear weapons—judged that the evidence did not support that conclusion. They now have been proven right.

Adding insult to injury, those chairing the NIE succumbed to the pressure to adduce the known forgery as evidence to support the Cheney line, and relegated the strong dissent of the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (and the nuclear engineers in the Department of Energy) to an inconspicuous footnote.

It is a curious turn of events. The drafters of the offending sentence on the forgery in the president’s state-of-the-union speech say they were working from the NIE. In ordinary circumstances an NIE would be the preeminently authoritative source to rely upon; but in this case the NIE itself had already been cooked to the recipe of high policy.

Joseph Wilson, the former US ambassador who visited Niger at Cheney’s request, enjoys wide respect (including,

like several VIPS members, warm encomia from your father). He is the consummate diplomat. So highly disturbed is he, however, at the chicanery he has witnessed that he allowed himself a very undiplomatic comment to a reporter last week, wondering aloud “what else they are lying about.” Clearly, Wilson has concluded that the time for diplomatic language has passed. It is clear that lies were told. Sad to say, it is equally clear that your vice president led this campaign of deceit.

This was no case of petty corruption of the kind that forced Vice President Spiro Agnew’s resignation. This was a matter of war and peace. Thousands have died. There is no end in sight.

Recommendation #1

We recommend that you call an abrupt halt to attempts to prove Vice President Cheney “not guilty.” His role has been so transparent that such attempts will only erode further your own credibility. Equally pernicious, from our perspective, is the likelihood that intelligence analysts will conclude that the way to success is to acquiesce in the cooking of their judgments, since those above them will not be held accountable. We strongly recommend that you ask for Cheney’s immediate resignation. . . .

/s/

Ray Close, Princeton, NJ

David MacMichael, Linden, VA

Raymond McGovern, Arlington, VA

Steering Committee, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity

Congress Marks ‘Last Days’ of Richard Cheney

The U.S. Congress, under massive pressure from the international community, and increasing pressure from the American population, led by the political movement of Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche, is beginning to move in the direction that LaRouche specified—taking on Vice President Dick Cheney. The following selection is excerpted from the Congressional Record and from official letters from Members of the House and Senate.

Levin: Bush Mis-Statement ‘Not a Mistake,’ But Was ‘Calculated’

In a statement on the Senate floor, on July 15, Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) said, “Last week, CIA Director George Tenet accepted responsibility for having gone along with the African uranium statement in the President’s State of the Union address. . . . But his explanation of the CIA’s acquiescence in allowing the use of a clearly misleading statement



Some members of a large picket line of the LaRouche Youth Movement which met visiting (or, from the British view, escaping) Prime Minister Blair outside Congress on July 17.

raises more questions than it answers, and statements by other Administration officials, particularly National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, compound the problem.”

Levin rebutted Rice’s denials that the Administration “never said that we thought he [Saddam] had nuclear weapons,” pointing out: “But Vice President Cheney said on March 16, ‘we believe he [Saddam] has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons’ . . .

“The President’s statement that Iraq was attempting to acquire African uranium was not a ‘mistake.’ It was not inadvertent. It was not a slip. It was negotiated between the CIA and the NSC [National Security Council]. It was calculated. It was misleading. And what compounds its misleading nature is that the CIA not only ‘differed with the British dossier on the reliability of the uranium reporting’ to use Director Tenet’s words, but the CIA had also ‘expressed reservations,’ again using Director Tenet’s words, to the British in September 2002, nearly five months before the State of Union address. Furthermore, the CIA pressed the White House to remove a similar reference from the President’s speech on Oct. 7, 2002, and the White House did so nearly four months before the State of the Union address.”

Levin listed the following other attempts “made, apparently by the NSC and concurred in by the CIA, to create a false impression”:

Aluminum Tubes: “In a speech before the UN General Assembly on Sept. 12, 2002, President Bush said, ‘Iraq has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon.’ The Interna-

tional Atomic Energy Agency, after conducting an inquiry into the aluminum tubes issue, concluded they were not for uranium enrichment.”

Iraq/al-Qaeda connection: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld claimed a “bullet-proof case” demonstrating “ ‘that there are in fact al-Qaeda in Iraq.’ . . . It was certainly never a ‘bullet-proof’ case.”

Nuclear reconstitution: “Last Sunday, Ms. Rice said, ‘We have never said that we thought he [Saddam] had nuclear weapons.’ But Vice President Cheney said on March 16, ‘We believe he [Saddam] has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons.’ ”

Certainty that Iraq possesses chemical and biological weapons: “On Aug. 26, 2002, Vice President Cheney said, ‘Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us.’ . . . The fruitless search to date for Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction during and after our entry into Iraq suggests that our intelligence was either way off the mark, or seriously stretched.”

Mobile biological warfare labs: The CIA claimed that two trailers found in Iraq were for producing biological warfare agents, even through other experts and intelligence community members do not agree.

White House website photos: “The White House placed three sets of satellite photos on its website on Oct. 8, 2002, with the headline ‘Construction at Three Iraqi Nuclear Weapons-Related Facilities.’ Although one of the facilities was not

nuclear-related, the captions gave the impression that Iraq was proceeding with work on weapons of mass destruction at these facilities, although UNMOVIC and IAEA inspections at these facilities found no prohibited activities or weapons.”

Levin concludes with some major questions raised by Condoleezza Rice’s continuing to justify letting the uranium statement be used in the President’s State of the Union Address. These include:

“Who in the Administration was pressing the CIA to concur in a statement that the CIA did not believe was true. . . ?

“Who in the White House was involved in removing a similar reference from the President’s speech on Oct. 7, nearly four months before the State of the Union speech? . . .

“What role did the Office of the Vice President have in bringing about an inquiry into Iraq’s purported efforts to obtain uranium from Africa? Was the Vice President’s staff briefed on the results of Ambassador Wilson’s trip to Africa.”

Immediate Hearings Needed by House Intelligence Committee

“Some press accounts indicate the [forged Niger] documents were first given to Vice President Cheney’s office by the British ‘via the Italians’ in early 2002,” wrote Rep. Henry Waxman (Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the Committee on Government Reform, in a July 15 letter to Rep. Porter Goss (R-Fla.), Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and to its ranking Democrat, Jane Harman (D-Calif.), ranking Democratic. Waxman is also a member of the Intelligence Committee.

Waxman’s 12-page letter challenges all of the contradictions in the explanations given by the White House on the use of forged intelligence in Bush’s State of the Union address, and also details that “The President’s statement in the State of the Union address was by no means the only use of the Niger evidence by Administration officials.”

Waxman asks, “Who was responsible for the repeated attempts by Administration officials to use the bogus evidence? . . . [T]here was a concerted effort spanning many months and involving multiple Administration officials to promote the claim that Iraq was seeking to import uranium from Africa. . . . And we know that these efforts occurred despite repeated attempts by intelligence officials at the CIA



LaRouche organizers chant and march outside Blair’s speech. Despite his medal from Congress, both practitioners of the “ignoble lie,” Blair and Cheney, are under mounting pressure to resign.

and the State Department to discredit the evidence. Yet we still do not know who was behind this repeated effort to promote the phony evidence.”

Waxman argues in his letter, “Under these circumstances there is no longer any reasonable justification for considering this matter in closed proceedings. Nor . . . for further delay. Public hearings in the Intelligence Committee to examine the handling of the Niger evidence should commence before the upcoming August recess.” The Congressman dismisses the White House attempt to pin the error on Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet, noting that Tenet was the person who had “urged restraint” about citing the information.

Instead of accepting this excuse, Waxman says that “all relevant agencies” must be scrutinized, including “the CIA, the State Department, and the Defense Department, as well as the Vice President’s office and the White House.” He takes particular note of press reports, that the citation of the Niger forged documents had been included in “the first draft” of Secretary of State Colin Powell’s speech to the UN General Assembly “‘written by Cheney’s staff and the National Security Council.’ ”

Representative Waxman has been investigating the story of the forged Niger documents since March 2003, after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) disclosed on March 7, 2003 that the documents had been forged—*before* the Iraq War began.

On June 26, Waxman and 20 fellow House members—



who had *supported* the resolution to use force in Iraq, House Joint Resolution 114, in October 2002—have now introduced a bill, HR 2625, to establish an Independent Commission on Intelligence About Iraq. However, since such a commission would “take months to enact,” Waxman urges, “It is essential that the Intelligence Committee hold immediate public hearings on the Niger evidence.”

Did Congress Vote for War, Based on ‘False Intelligence’?

On July 11, Rep. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) issued a press release, “Congressional Democrats Demand the Truth: 16 Democrats Supportive of Iraqi War Resolution Sign Markey Letter to Bush on False Intelligence.” The release says that Representative Markey, the “co-chair of the Bipartisan Taskforce on Non-Proliferation, and Senior Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Select Committee on Homeland Security, sent a letter [dated July 10] to President Bush questioning the erroneous information provided to Congress by the Administration to convince Members to vote in favor of House Joint Resolution 114 authorizing military force in Iraq.” Markey stated: “President Bush has many questions to answer about the use and misuse of intelligence on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction programs. The American people were given erroneous information . . . [and] the credibility of this Administration rests on the answers to the questions we have asked.”

The signers, all Democrats who voted to give the President authorization for the use of force in Iraq are: Edward Markey (Mass.); Patrick Kennedy (R.I.); Martin Meehan (Mass.); Sanford Bishop (Ga.); Anthony Weiner (N.Y.); Bill

Pascrell (Calif.); Ellen Tauscher (Calif.); Lyn Woolsey (Calif.); Robert Wexler (Fla.); Marion Berry (Ark.); Steven Rothman, (N.J.); Gene Taylor (Miss.); Baron Hill (Ind.); Steve Israel (N.Y.); Shelley Berkley (Nev.); and Gary Ackerman (N.Y.).

The letter gives Bush a detailed list of questions:

“1. Exactly how did the claim regarding Iraqi efforts to obtain uranium from Africa get into your State of the Union speech, in light of the evidence in the possession of the Executive Branch that this claim was based on forged documents?

“2. Who within the Executive Branch reviewed and approved the inclusion of this statement in your speech?

“3. Did anyone raise concerns about its inclusion? If not, why? If so, why were such concerns apparently disregarded?

“4. Ambassador Joseph Wilson, who was dispatched to Niger to investigate the intelligence reports about a putative Iraq-Niger uranium connection, stated in an interview on NBC, that his doubts about the purported Iraq-Niger connection reached the highest levels of government, including Vice President Dick Cheney’s office. . . . What input did the Vice President have into your State of the Union speech? Did the Vice President’s office receive one or more drafts of the speech prior to its delivery, and if so, when?”

The last of the six questions, includes the direct challenge to Bush, on three areas, “During your State of the Union address you stated. . .” and then asking about the President’s assertions:

“(a) Where are the 500 tons of sarin, mustard, and VX nerve agent you discussed? Was the intelligence information upon which this statement was based erroneous?

“(b) Where are the remaining 29,984 chemical weapons-capable munitions? Was the intelligence information upon which this statement was based also erroneous?

“(c) Where are the several mobile weapons labs? We are aware of press reports of the discovery of one vehicle that some within the Administration claimed to represent one such lab, but we are also aware from press reports that some within the intelligence community do not believe the evidence supports such a conclusion.”

It concludes with concern, that “there is a danger that nations around the world may lose confidence that they can rely on the United States for straight information on the growing risk of nonproliferation.”