

Cheney Coverup of Iraq Intelligence Fakery Unravels

by Edward Spannaus and Jeffrey Steinberg

Vice President Dick Cheney—whose heavy-handed pressure on intelligence analysts to “cook the books” on the Iraq threat has already been widely exposed—has now been caught red-handed trying to orchestrate a coverup of his own role, by shifting the blame away from himself and his neo-conservative clique in the U.S. Administration, onto the Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence community. But it is becoming clear that some members of the Congressional intelligence committees aren’t going to play the Vice President’s game.

On Oct. 22, Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche told an international webcast audience: “If you want to get through to next year, to the next election, *get rid of Cheney now!* Tell that man to go!” LaRouche initiated the fight to oust Cheney over a year ago, and his mobilization and exposure of Cheney’s role is now bearing fruit. It is now becoming increasingly and publicly recognized, that it is Cheney—not President George W. Bush—who runs this Administration, and that it was Cheney who played upon Bush’s susceptibilities to drag the country into what threatens to become perpetual war in the Middle East.

Pressure is building against Cheney on two closely-related fronts: (1) on the faked intelligence used to justify the Iraq invasion, in which Cheney played a central role; and (2) on the demand for a thorough investigation of the illegal leaking of the identity of former Ambassador Joseph Wilson’s wife, a covert CIA operative, in an attempt to discredit Wilson’s revelations on the Niger/yellowcake fairy tale.

Beyond these matters, still more pressure is being put on Cheney by the daily drumbeat of stories on the corrupt “reconstruction” contracts doled out to Cheney’s Halliburton company and others, compounded by the utter failure of stabilization and reconstruction efforts inside Iraq.

Shifting the Blame

The breaking point on Cheney’s cover-up came on Oct. 24, when the *Washington Post* plastered a fraudulent, planted story across the top of its front page, claiming that the Senate Intelligence Committee was preparing a “blistering report” blaming the intelligence community, and the CIA in particular, for “overstating” the case on Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein’s chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, and his al-

leged links to al-Qaeda terrorists. The chairman of the Committee, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), was quoted as saying that “the Executive was ill-served by the intelligence community” and its “sloppy” intelligence product. The *Washington Post* asserted that “the Senate report shifts attention toward the intelligence community and away from White House officials, who have been criticized for exaggerating the Iraq threat.”

By that afternoon, it was being reported that Dick Cheney himself had pressed Roberts to put the blame on the CIA.

“A senior administration official, who agreed to speak only on the condition of anonymity, said Roberts’ CIA comments were issued with Cheney’s encouragement,” reported the Knight-Ridder news service. “The official said Cheney is trying to shift the blame for the lack of progress on Iraq, which is becoming an issue in next year’s Presidential and Congressional elections, from the White House to the CIA.”

Robert’s published comments—which he was later forced to partially disavow—prompted a highly unusual public statement by the senior Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), in a dramatic break from the normally bipartisan nature of that committee’s functioning.

Rockefeller denounced Roberts’s efforts, which Rockefeller characterized as “saying the blame is with the intelligence community, and there will be no questions about the White House.” Rockefeller said that, on the contrary, the resolution that created the Senate Intelligence Committee “specifically gives us jurisdiction to look into the matter of use,” and that the investigation must cover not only the collection and analysis of intelligence, but how it was *used* by policy-makers.

Clearly referring to the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans (OSP), Rockefeller raised the question of whether “there was intelligence that was being run without the knowledge of the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department or anybody else, from certain places.” He continued: “I’ll say no more than that, but that would be rather startling, wouldn’t it, if intelligence was being collected overseas which the Central Intelligence Agency had no knowledge of, or the State Department community had no knowledge of. There are a lot of things we have yet to investigate.”

The OSP is headed by William Luti, who first served as a Middle East specialist on Cheney's staff, before being deployed over to the Pentagon to run the secretive OSP, which has been accused of running a parallel intelligence operation, drawing on widely discredited Iraqi exile sources such as Ahmed Chalabi, and also on disinformation flows from a parallel unit located in the office of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

According to Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski (USAF-ret.), who served during 2002-2003 in the Near East and South Asia Policy Office at the Pentagon, which housed OSP, Luti boasted in staff meetings that he was reporting to Cheney's Chief of Staff "Scooter" Libby.

In his Oct. 24 comments, Rockefeller made it clear that he is prepared to utilize a special committee rule to conduct his own investigation of how top Administration officials such as Bush, Cheney, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, used or exaggerated Iraq intelligence. Under committee rules, Rockefeller stated, "All I have to do is to get five signatures that we want to investigate a subject—the use of, for example, of intelligence, the shaping of intelligence, the manipulation of intelligence, or whatever. . . . We can investigate that. And there's no way that the Chairman can say that we cannot do that. And if it comes to that, we will resort to that."

On Oct. 30, Roberts apparently agreed to Rockefeller's demands to probe the White House and Executive agencies. Letters were delivered to the National Security Council, State Department, and Pentagon, criticizing them for failing to provide requested materials, and demanding that documentation be delivered immediately. The letters, signed jointly by Roberts and Rockefeller, specifically cited the Pentagon's OPS, and two leading Cheney agents of influence: Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Doug Feith, and Assistant Secretary of State John Bolton.

Retired CIA Officials Speak Out

Rockefeller's uncharacteristically tough comments followed a special briefing held by the Senate Democratic Policy Committee on the morning of Oct. 24, which featured three retired CIA officials: Vincent Cannistraro, Larry Johnson, and Jim Marcinkowski. All three highlighted the severe damage to U.S. national security resulting from the Wilson leak, and attacked the overall faking of intelligence to justify the Iraq war.

The three rebutted an earlier story planted by Intelligence Committee Republicans in *USA Today*, which had reported that the Senate investigation "has found no evidence that the Bush administration pressured CIA analysts to tailor their intelligence to suit the White House's view on the threat posed by Iraq."

They said that currently-serving CIA analysts were in fact under heavy pressure from Vice President Cheney and others to produce intelligence that supported the Administration's push for war against Iraq. The officers cited the repeated,

and what they called "unprecedented," visits to Langley by Cheney and Libby. "This is the first time in 27 years I have ever heard of a Vice President sitting down with desk analysts," Cannistraro said, "and pushing them to find support for something he believes. That is pressure."

Moreover, they disclosed, analysts interviewed by the Intelligence Committee, had "minders" from their agency with them, from the General Counsel's office, or the Congressional Relations office—obviously meaning that they did not feel they could speak freely. Rockefeller said that he had been unaware of this, since the interviews were conducted by Roberts's staff, and he stated that this signifies that "the possibility of pressure" on those committee witnesses, "is very real."

The Wilson/Plame Leak

The three former CIA officers also delivered strong, angry testimony on the leak of the identity of Joe Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, and its effect on CIA clandestine operations and the morale of Agency operatives. "The U.S. government has never before released the name of a clandestine officer," said Marcinkowski, who had undergone CIA basic training in the same class as Plame. "My classmates and I have been betrayed."

All three said that they had voted Republican in the last Presidential elections, decrying the partisan manner in which Bush Administration spokesmen have responded to the leak. "This isn't about partisan politics," Johnson said. "This is about protecting national security and national security assets, and in this case there has been a betrayal, not only of the CIA officers there, but really a betrayal of those of us who have kept the secrets over the years on this point."

The previous day, the Senate Intelligence Committee had held a closed-door hearing to hear from Johnson and Marcinkowski. The two retired agents had asked for the special session, so that they could urge the Committee to investigate the leak, as a means of looking over the shoulder of the Justice Department probe being supervised by Attorney General Ashcroft.

Plame's identity was leaked to columnist Robert Novak and other prominent journalists in July, in an effort to discredit Wilson's findings from his February 2002 trip to Niger, which was made as a result of an inquiry by Cheney to the CIA, on stories that Iraq was attempting to purchase uranium from the African state. Wilson came back with solid evidence that the story was false. A year later, in March 2003, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, the chairman of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told the United Nations Security Council that the documents which had been the basis for the Niger uranium story, were forgeries.

A well-placed U.S. intelligence source told *EIR* that, within days of the ElBaradei testimony, discussions took place in the Vice President's office, over steps to contain the damage from Wilson's revelations.