

Congressman Moots Cheney Impeachment

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On the eve of the Iowa Democratic caucuses, Rep. Jerry Costello (D-Ill.) stunned voters at a Gephardt rally by mooting there could soon be impeachment hearings against Vice President Cheney, stemming from the Congressional probe of Halliburton sweetheart contracts in Iraq. Dick Cheney is the former CEO of Halliburton, and as Secretary of Defense in the Bush "41" Administration, he hired Halliburton to conduct a \$25-million secret study of how to outsource and privatize many Defense Department logistical and support functions. After he left Washington in January 1993, Cheney took over the Dallas-based oil industry service firm, and turned it into a major government subcontractor.

Halliburton is today the number one recipient of no-bid contracts for Iraqi reconstruction work, and is under Congressional investigation for price gouging and other contract violations. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on Jan. 23 that two Halliburton executives have confessed to taking a \$6 million payoff from Kuwaiti subcontractors, to cut them in on Halliburton's Iraq business. And a recent Congressional Research Service study found that Cheney has not divested his holdings in Halliburton, as claimed; he still receives deferred salary payments in the hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, and holds nearly a half-million company stock options.

When the Internet Drudge Report characterized Costello's remarks as a call for Cheney's impeachment, the Congressman issued a clarification on Jan. 20: "I was not calling for impeachment hearings"; but hearings on Cheney and Halliburton contracts will continue, and "It Would not surprise me if a member of Congress called for such hearings based on the findings." A Congressional aide told *EIR*, in response to the report on Costello, that many Congressmen are thinking of impeachment, "and they are even talking about it in the Administration."

That Cheney has become a major liability for President Bush's re-election bid is an open secret in Washington. As of this writing, the first 200,000 copies of the LaRouche in 2004 campaign pamphlet, *Children of Satan II: The Beast-Men*, have been distributed, and a second printing is to hit the streets in days. The report exposes Cheney's pivotal role in the drive for an American imperium waging "perpetual war" across Eurasia, including the use of mini-nukes against Third World targets. On Jan. 21, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence began two days of closed hearings into the intelligence fakery leading to the Iraq war. Cheney led the effort to sell Congress and the American people on invading Iraq and over-

throwing Saddam Hussein, on the basis of fraudulent or grossly exaggerated claims that Iraq possessed arsenals of weapons of mass destruction, and had ties to al-Qaeda.

When a bipartisan Senate intelligence panel probe into the hoaxes was launched, Cheney, through Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), ordered the panel to end the effort, and still-unidentified people stole and leaked a Democratic panel internal memo to rightwing journalists, to stymie committee efforts.

Cheney and top aides Lewis "Scooter" Libby and John Hannah head the list of suspects in the leaking of the identity of CIA covert operations officer Valerie Plame, the wife of former Ambassador Joseph Wilson. The probe of that leak is being headed by Chicago U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, after Attorney General John Ashcroft recused himself due to possible conflict of interest. The issue of the Plame leak has also suddenly become red hot. On Jan. 20, ten former CIA case officers and analysts wrote to the House leadership, demanding a full bipartisan Congressional probe into the Plame leak, describing it as "an unprecedented and shameful event" that "has damaged U.S. national security, specifically the effectiveness of U.S. intelligence gathering using human sources" (see *Documentation*).

The letter, which was released by Rep. Nancy Pelosi, was sent as Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ), a member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, who submitted a resolution of inquiry to force the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the Justice Department to give the House documents related to the ongoing probe of the Plame leak. The unusual procedure, which is unique to the House of Representatives, could lead to the creation of a full House special "leakgate" panel; at minimum it, in the words of Rep. Holt, puts greater pressure on the Administration to end the six-month stonewall. Pelosi, the House Democratic Leader, issued a press statement Jan. 22, endorsing both the CIA officers' letter and the Holt initiative, complaining, "I cannot understand, given the seriousness of this matter, why the President has not become personally involved. He has not been well served by the action of a person or persons on the White House staff who, having possession of information of great sensitivity, chose to disclose it to the media. The President should demand that those responsible identify themselves immediately to him and face the consequences."

With all of this smoke around the Vice President, George W. Bush and chief political strategist Karl Rove asked the Vice President to launch a "charm offensive" to salvage his position on the ticket. Last weekend, Cheney used a campaign tour of the Western states to give his first interview to reporters in nearly two years. A team of journalists from the *Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today* were given an opportunity to interview him, and on Jan. 19, both papers ran versions of the Cheney chat.

In one of two *USA Today* stories, reporter Judy Keen made clear that Cheney has emerged from his cave on orders from Bush campaign strategists: "Politics is behind his emergence:

Cheney's 'Free Speech' Cages

On a campaign fundraising stop in Portland, Oregon on Jan. 13, Vice President Cheney exploited a recent Federal court decision, in the criminal case of *U.S.A. v. Bursey*, to expand the use of the shamefully mislabelled "Free Speech Zones" to literally cage his opponents. Protesters were not allowed to approach the event at a hotel near the Portland Airport, but were directed by police to a muddy field at least 100 yards away, where they were enclosed behind an eight-foot-high chain-link fence topped with razor wire. Over the last year, the Bush Administration has been implementing a Homeland Security policy of creating pre-arranged vicinity-exclusion zones, designated by Secret Service agents, during campaign speeches and stopovers. Secret Service teams advance-scout the vicinity for vacant lots, ballparks, airfields, and areas that might hold many hundreds or thousands of protesters. The sites are generally located from a block to a third of a mile or more from the

site of the political event, always well out of camera range. The area chosen, is enclosed in portable chain-link, and given the Orwellian designation of a Free Speech Zone. Secret Service then provides local law enforcement with criteria for determining which members of the public may enter the area where Bush is speaking, and which must use the Free Speech Zone. Administration supporters, with their signs, are allowed access to the President, and are present for the media. Other citizens with protest signs are told they must exercise their right of dissent in the Free Speech Zone.

Will Seaman, of the Portland Peaceful Resource Coalition, said of the area where Cheney protesters were caged, "It was completely inaccessible," and a half-mile from the nearest public transit. "It was a marsh," he noted. At one point, dozens of riot police and other officers on bicycle, horseback and all-terrain vehicles massed across from the protesters. They were informed, via loudspeaker, that any attempts to pass or tamper with the barricade could subject them to the use of force, including chemical agents or impact weapons, as well as to arrest and criminal charges.

Bush strategists believe it's time for Cheney to move from undisclosed secure locations to the front lines of the campaign, and a little image repair is in order." She noted, "Critics also view Cheney as the man responsible for the Administration's penchant for secrecy and a hard-liner who helped drag Bush into war with Iraq. Halliburton, the company he once headed, is being investigated for its lucrative Pentagon contracts. Some people wonder whether Cheney will be an asset or a liability in this campaign." She quoted Democratic strategist Paul Begala: "If you're a rich, fat white guy, he's your hero. But he's a very controversial guy. This is what comes with being the most powerful Vice President in history."

The *Los Angeles Times* was generally kinder to the Vice President, although reporter Maura Reynolds wrote, "Democrats and other critics paint Cheney as a dark, insidious force pushing Bush toward war and confrontation. But that doesn't bother the vice president. 'What's wrong with my image?' Cheney asks with a laugh. He contends that he operates in public when it serves the Administration's agenda, and in private when that is more effective. 'Am I the evil genius in the corner that nobody ever sees coming out of his hole?' he asks. 'It's a nice way to operate, actually.' " The interview transcript shows Cheney trying to soften his profile as the super-hawk who sought out cooked intelligence to justify war with Iraq. He admitted he asked tough questions, but denied he relied on "stovepiped" intelligence from Iraqi dissidents to sell the war. On the Paul O'Neill flap, Cheney grew defensive, denying charges that he is the real power in the Administration, responsible for the policy disasters; but making clear the former Treasury Secretary is no longer a friend.

Cheney's soft-peddling lasted exactly 72 hours. On Jan. 20, his war-party prints were all over President Bush's State of the Union address. And on Jan. 22, he showed up at the Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) annual conference in Washington, and delivered his standard lying rant: still linking Saddam Hussein to Al-Qaeda and the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001; and vowing that U.S. inspectors will sooner or later find those vast quantities of weapons of mass destruction that he and his neo-con minions cited as the reason for war.

Documentation

CIA Veterans Demand House Action on Leak

This letter was sent by ten retired CIA officers to Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Tex.), House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Cal.), Rep. Porter Goss (R-Fla.), and Rep. Jane Harman (D-Cal.), and the ranking Members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We the undersigned former intelligence officers in the

U.S. intelligence community, request that you launch an immediate, bipartisan congressional investigation into who leaked the name of Valerie Plame, wife of former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Wilson IV, to syndicated columnist Robert Novak and other members of the media that exposed her status as an undercover CIA officer. The disclosure of Ms. Plame's name was an unprecedented and shameful event in American history and, in our professional judgment, has damaged U.S. national security, specifically the effectiveness of U.S. intelligence gathering using human sources. Any breach of the code of confidentiality and cover weakens the overall fabric of intelligence, and directly or indirectly jeopardizes the work and safety of intelligence workers and their sources.

While we are pleased that the U.S. Department of Justice is conducting an investigation, and that the U.S. Attorney General has recused himself, we believe that the Congress must send an unambiguous message that the intelligence officers tasked with collecting or analyzing intelligence must never be turned into political punching bags. We believe it is important that Congress speak with one non-partisan voice on this issue. Moreover, the investigation must focus on more than simply identifying who leaked the information. We believe it is important that Congress help the American people understand how this happened, and take a clear stand that such behavior will not be tolerated under any Administration, Republican or Democrat. A thorough and successful Congressional investigation of this crime is necessary to send a clear signal that the elected representatives of this government will not accept nor ignore the political exploitation of the men and women in our intelligence community. A professional, thorough investigation will also help boost the weakened morale of our intelligence personnel and renew their confidence and trust in the elected leadership of the country.

Our friends and colleagues have difficult jobs gathering the intelligence, which helps, for example, to prevent terrorist attacks against Americans at home and abroad. They sometimes face great personal risk and must spend long hours away from family and friends. They serve because they love this country and are committed to defending the principles of liberty and freedom. They do not expect public acknowledgement for their work, but they do expect and deserve their government's protection.

For the good of our country, we ask you to please stand up for every man and woman who works for the U.S. intelligence community, by immediately launching a Congressional investigation.

Sincerely Yours,

Larry C. Johnson, former Analyst; **James Marcinkowski**, former Case Officer; **Michael Grimaldi**, former Analyst; **Brent Cavan**, former Analyst; **Dr. Marc Sageman** MD; Ph.D., former Case Officer; **James A. Smith**, former Case Officer; **John McCavitt**, former Case Officer; **Ray McGovern**, former Analyst; **Ray Close**, former Analyst; **William Wagner**, former Case Officer.