

THE WHITE HOUSE'S CAMPAIGN FOR WAR: IN THIS CASE, THE CRIME IS JUST AS BAD AS THE COVER-UP

With Scooter Libby's testimony that President Bush authorized the disclosure of classified information in order to discredit Joe Wilson for questioning the White House's use of intelligence, the American people are finding out the true lengths that the Bush Administration went to in order to squash criticism as they planned their campaign for war. In addition to President Bush and Vice President Cheney's sign-off on leaking classified information to a New York Times reporter, there are still unanswered questions about the White House's role in revealing the identity of Wilson's wife as a CIA officer as retribution, as well as the White House effort to keep its involvement out of the public eye. Below is a timeline you may find useful.

JULY 6, 2003: WILSON EXPOSED THE TRUTH

July 2003: Wilson Appeared On Meet The Press And Wrote An Op-Ed Critical of Administration's Iraq Uranium Claims. In July of 2003 Wilson went on the record with his concerns about the Administration's claims that Iraq had attempted to acquire Uranium from Niger. Wilson wrote an Op-Ed in the New York Times on July 6 and then appeared on Meet the Press to voice his concerns. Up until that point Wilson had only been commenting on background. [Newsweek, 7/25/05]

AMMUNITION WAS READIED BEFORE WILSON WENT PUBLIC

June 2003: The State Department Compiled a Memo on Joe Wilson. On June 10, 2003 the State Department's Office of Intelligence and Research compiled a memo for Marc Grossman, then the Under Secretary of State for political affairs, on Joe Wilson's mission to Niger. The memo included the fact that Wilson's wife was a CIA operative working on WMD issues. At the time, Wilson was criticizing the administration's justification for the war, specifically discrediting the charge that Iraq was attempting to purchase yellow cake uranium. [Newsweek, 7/25/05; New York Times, 7/16/05]

- **State Department Memo Was Marked as Containing Sensitive Information.** According to officials familiar with the case, the memo compiled by the State Department's Office of Intelligence and Research was marked as sensitive information. The section of the document pertaining to Plame's role in the trip to Niger was marked as especially sensitive. According to the Wall Street Journal, "the paragraph in the memo discussing Ms. Wilson's involvement...is marked at the beginning with a letter designation in brackets to indicate the information shouldn't be shared...Such a designation would indicate to a reader that the information was sensitive." [Bloomberg, 7/18/05; Wall Street Journal, 7/19/05]

ADMINISTRATION IMMEDIATELY PREPPED TO COUNTER WILSON

HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS MADE AWARE OF PLAME'S IDENTITY...

July 6, 2003: Armitage Asked For State Department Memo To Be Forwarded To Powell After Wilson's Critical Op-Ed Appeared. When Mr. Wilson's Op-Ed article appeared on July 6, 2003, a Sunday, Richard L. Armitage, then Deputy Secretary of State, called Carl W. Ford Jr., the Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research, at home, a former State Department official said. Mr. Armitage asked Mr. Ford to send a copy of the State Department memo to Mr. Powell, who was preparing to leave for Africa with Mr. Bush, the former official said. Mr. Ford sent it to the White House for transmission to Mr. Powell. [New York Times, 7/16/05]

July 7, 2003: Powell Circulated The Memo That Identified Plame To White House Officials on Air Force One. The Los Angeles Times reported that, “[Armitage] was forwarded a copy of a memo classified ‘Secret’ that included a description of Wilson's trip for the CIA, his findings, a brief description of the origin of the trip and a reference to ‘Wilson's wife.’... July 7, this memo and the notes were removed from the safe and forwarded to Powell via a secure fax line to Air Force One. Powell was on the way to Africa with the president...Powell told prosecutors that he circulated the memo among those traveling with him in the front section of Air Force One.” It was also reported Ari Fleischer and other high level officials were seen with the memo. According to individuals connected to the case, the Special Prosecutor, Peter Fitzgerald believed “that a printout of memo was in the front of Air Force One” during the trip, making it available to various members of the Bush staff. [Los Angeles Times, 8/25/05; Washington Post, 7/17/05; Bloomberg, 7/18/05]

- **July 2005: Fleischer Claimed He Never Saw The Memo.** “Among those asked if he had seen the memo was Ari Fleischer, then the White House press secretary, who was on Air Force One with Mr. Bush and Mr. Powell during the Africa trip. Mr. Fleischer told the grand jury that he never saw the document, a person familiar with the testimony said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the prosecutor's admonitions about not disclosing what is said to the grand jury.” [New York Times, 7/22/05]

...AND THEN PUBLICLY PUSHED THE INFORMATION IN THE MEMO

State Department Memo May Have Been Used to Brief Rice for Sunday Shows. “Meanwhile, in transatlantic secure phone calls, the message machinery focused on a crucial topic: who should carry the freight on the following Sunday's talk shows? The message: protect Cheney by explaining that he had had nothing to do with sending Wilson to Niger, and dismiss the yellowcake issue. ...Condi Rice, the ultimate good soldier... To allow her to prepare on the long flight home to D.C., White House officials assembled a briefing book, which they faxed to the Bush entourage in Africa...It contained classified information—perhaps including all or part of the memo from State. The entire binder was labeled TOP SECRET.” [Newsweek, 7/25/05]

Administration Officials Pushed Information To Reporters That Was Contained in Memo. During the Bush Administration's trip to Africa, Fleischer and Dan Bartlett urged reporters to look into the origins of Wilson's trip. The fact that Plame had been involved in the initial meetings on Wilson's trip was contained in the State Department Memo and was in the section marked “sensitive”. [Wall Street Journal, 7/19/05; Newsweek, 7/25/05]

Novak Attempted to Contact Fleischer While He was On Air Force One. According to sources close to the investigation, Air Force One call logs show that Bob Novak attempted to get in contact with White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer while he was on Air Force One during the White House's Trip to Africa. Special Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald subpoenaed the phone and fax records of Air Force One. [Los Angeles Times, 7/18/05]

JULY 2003: ROVE DIRECTED A BEHIND THE SCENES SMEAR CAMPAIGN

ROVE AND LIBBY WORKED TO DISCREDIT WILSON

July 2003: Rove Declared Wilson's Wife “Fair Game.” Wilson said that Chris Matthews called him one week after Novak's column ran saying, “I just got off the phone with Karl Rove. He says your wife is fair game.” [Face the Nation, 10/3/03; CNN, 7/14/05]

July 8, 2003: Libby Leaks Classified Information From National Intelligence Estimate to Judith Miller at the New York Times to Rebut Wilson's Claims. In a court filing late Wednesday, documents shed new light on Mr. Libby's claims that he was authorized to provide sensitive information to the Times reporter, Judith Miller, at a meeting on July 8, 2003... "Defendant [Scooter Libby] testified that he was specifically authorized in advance of the meeting to disclose the key judgments of the classified NIE to Miller on that occasion because it was thought that the NIE was 'pretty definitive' against what Ambassador Wilson had said and that the vice president thought that it was 'very important' for the key judgments of the NIE to come out... One of the facts Mr. Libby said he planned to disclose to Ms. Miller was that the estimate, produced in October 2002, concluded that Iraq was 'vigorously trying to procure uranium.' This contention was sharply at odds with Mr. Wilson's op-ed piece which argued there was no evidence of such a procurement effort." [[New York Sun](#), 4/6/06]

- **Libby Claims Bush Authorized Disclosure of Classified Information To Rebut Wilson's Assertions.** Libby apparently testified that "'at first' he rebuffed Mr. Cheney's suggestion to release the information because the estimate was classified. However...Mr. Cheney subsequently said he got permission for the release directly from Mr. Bush. 'Defendant testified that the vice president later advised him that the president had authorized defendant to disclose the relevant portions of the NIE,' the prosecution filing said." [[New York Sun](#), 4/6/06]
- **Cheney Knew That Libby Would Be Providing Classified Information To A Reporter; Libby Claims Cheney Also Personally Leaked Information About Wilson's Trip.** "The court papers filed by Mr. Fitzgerald do not make clear whether Mr. Bush knew the disclosure was destined for Ms. Miller, though they indicate Mr. Cheney knew that fact. Mr. Libby is also said to have testified that five days late Mr. Cheney authorized the release to the press of information about a cable about Mr. Wilson's trip." [[New York Sun](#), 4/6/06]

July 11, 2003: Rove Gave Matthew Cooper A "Big Warning" That Wilson's Assertions Might Not Be Accurate. Rove had a conversation with Time magazine reporter Matthew Cooper on July 11, 2003. Cooper wrote an email about the conversation to his [Time](#) bureau chief, describing how Rove gave him a "big warning" that Wilson's assertions might not be entirely accurate and that it was not the director of the CIA or the vice president who sent Wilson on his trip. Rather, "it was, KR said, Wilson's wife, who apparently works at the agency on wmd who authorized the trip." Wilson's wife is Valerie Plame, who was then an undercover agent working as an analyst in the CIA's Directorate of Operations counter proliferation division. [[Washington Post](#), 7/11/05; [Newsweek](#), 7/18/05]

July 14, 2003: Novak Revealed The Classified Identity Of Wilson's Wife In His Column. Bob Novak named Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, in his syndicated column, revealing the classified identity of a CIA agent as sourced by two White House aides. [[Chicago Sun-Times](#), 7/14/03]

Libby and Rove Were "Especially Intent" On Discrediting Wilson. "Prosecutors investigating whether administration officials illegally leaked the identity of Wilson's wife, a CIA officer who had worked undercover, have been told that Bush's top political strategist, Karl Rove, and Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis 'Scooter' Libby, were especially intent on undercutting Wilson's credibility, according to people familiar with the inquiry. Although lower-level White House staffers typically handle most contacts with the media, Rove and Libby began personally communicating with reporters about Wilson, prosecutors were told." [[Los Angeles Times](#), 7/18/05]

SEPTEMBER 2003: THE COVER-UP BEGINS

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT BEGINS INVESTIGATION

September 27, 2003: Justice Department Began Investigating The Leak. The Justice Department begins investigation into whether a law against disclosure of the identities of covert U.S. intelligence agents was violated when Plame was named in Novak's column and who was responsible. [CBSNews.com, 7/28/03; AP, 12/31/03]

WHITE HOUSE SAID THE LEAK WOULD BE TAKEN CARE OF, STOOD BEHIND ROVE

September 29, 2003: McClellan Said Leaker Would Be Fired. Scott McClellan said: "If anyone in this administration was involved in it, they would no longer be in this administration." [White House Press Briefing, 9/29/03]

September 30, 2003: Bush Said That If There Was A Leak In His Administration They Would Be "Taken Care Of." President Bush reiterated stern treatment for the culprit, saying, "if there was a leak out of my administration, I want to know who it is. And if the person has violated law, the person will be taken care of...And so I welcome the investigation...I have told our administration people in my administration to be fully cooperative. I want to know the truth." [White House, Bush Travel Pool, 9/30/03]

October 30, 2003: Bush Said Appropriate Action Will Be Taken Against The Leaker. President Bush said: "I don't know of anybody in my administration who leaked classified information. If somebody did leak classified information, I'd like to know it. And we'll take the appropriate action. And this investigation is a good thing." [FDCH Political Transcripts, 10/30/03]

- **October 6, 2003: Bush Said The Leak Was A Criminal Action.** When asked about the severity of the CIA Leak President Bush said, "this is a serious charge, by the way. We're talking about a criminal action." [Federal News Service, 10/6/03]

MCCLELLAN JOINED IN THE MIS-DIRECTION GAME

October 10, 2003: McClellan Said He Spoke With Rove And Libby Personally, And That They Denied Being Involved. Press Secretary Scott McClellan said political advisor Karl Rove, Vice Presidential Chief of Staff Lewis Libby, and National Security Council member Elliott Abrams had each denied being the source of the leak. Said McClellan, "Those individuals — I talked — I spoke with those individuals, as I pointed out, and those individuals assured me they were not involved in this. And that's where it stands." [WH Briefing, 10/10/03]

- **McClellan Said It Would Be Absurd To Suggest Anyone In The White House Would Punish Someone For Speaking Out With A Different View.** "It is absurd to suggest that this White House would seek to punish someone for speaking out with a different view," McClellan said, adding: "It's perfectly acceptable when someone makes statements that aren't based on the facts to correct that information." [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 10/8/03]

McClellan Said It Was Ridiculous To Think Rove Was To Blame for Leak. "There's been nothing, absolutely nothing, brought to our attention to suggest any White House involvement [in the CIA leak]," said White House spokesman Scott McClellan... McClellan dismissed the suggestion and said the White House would cooperate with a Justice Department probe. But he said it was 'ridiculous' to blame Rove." [Daily News, 10/30/03]

Libby Asked McClellan to Defend Him With the Same Vigor As He Defended Rove. Court papers include “handwritten suggestions Mr. Libby gave to the White House press secretary, Scott McClellan, urging the spokesman to proclaim the vice presidential aide's innocence with the same vigor that the press secretary previously denounced as ‘ridiculous’ suggestions that Mr. Rove might have had a hand in leaking Ms. Plame's identity...Libby wrote [talking points for McClellan stating] that ‘I've talked to Libby...I said it was ridiculous about Karl...And it is ridiculous about Libby.’” [[Daily News](#), 10/30/03]

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HANDED OVER THE CASE TO A SPECIAL PROSECUTOR

December 30, 2003: Ashcroft Removes Himself From Investigation, Special Prosecutor Appointed.

Attorney General John Ashcroft and his office staff recused themselves from the Justice Department's criminal investigation into the leak of the name and identity of an undercover CIA officer. Deputy Attorney General James Comey announced at a news conference in Washington December 30 that he has named Patrick Fitzgerald, the U.S. attorney for the northern district of Illinois, to lead the probe. [State Department Briefing, 9/30/03]

- **Fitzgerald Recruited To The Case Because Of His Lack Of Political Agenda.** “Fitzgerald was recruited to the case in December 2003 by close friend James B. Comey, deputy attorney general to John D. Ashcroft. He was two years into a posting as Chicago's U.S. attorney, a job he won partly because he was a seasoned outsider with no evident political agenda, qualities that inspired Comey to appoint him to a case with powerful partisan overtones.” [[Washington Post](#), 10/24/05]

ROVE WAS IDENTIFIED AS THE SOURCE

July 10, 2005: Rove Confirmed As Cooper's Source. Rove's attorney, Robert Luskin, confirmed that Rove was the secret source who, at the request of both Cooper's lawyer and the prosecutor, gave Cooper permission to testify. Cooper avoided jail time last week by agreeing to testify before the grand jury about conversations with his sources, while [New York Times](#) reporter Judith Miller was jailed for refusing to discuss her confidential sources. [[Washington Post](#), 7/11/05; [Newsweek](#), 7/18/05]

WHITE HOUSE BACKED AWAY FROM ITS UNFAILING SUPPORT FOR ROVE

July 11, 2005: White House Press Secretary Refuses to Answer Questions About Press Leak. Scott McClellan refuses to answer questions about the leak days after Rove was identified as a source in the CIA leak, saying: “The criminal investigation that you reference is something that continues at this point. And as I've previously stated, while that investigation is ongoing, the White House is not going to comment on it.” [Transcript of White House Press Briefing, 7/11/05]

July 12, 2005: Bush Refused to Comment on Rove's Situation Citing an “Ongoing Investigation”; **McClellan Later Expressed President's “Confidence in Rove.”** Bush “ignored a question” about whether he would fire Rove now that it's known his adviser did talk to Cooper. But White House Press Secretary McClellan said later that “any individual who works here at the White House has the confidence of the president.” McClellan said that includes Rove. The [Los Angeles Times](#) reported Bush, “declined to defend Rove or to weigh in on the politically charged case.” The [Washington Times](#) wrote that Bush, “refused to comment on the reports that Mr. Rove mentioned 'Wilson's wife,' CIA employee Valerie Plame, to a reporter.” Bush is quoted saying, “We're in the midst of an ongoing investigation, and this is a serious investigation. ... I also will not prejudge the investigation based on media reports. ... I will be more than happy to comment further once the investigation is completed.” [[AP](#), 7/13/05; [Los Angeles Times](#), 7/14/05; [Washington Times](#), 7/14/05]

LIBBY INDICTED FOR PERJURY

October 2005: Libby Told Different Story Than Russert to Special Prosecutor; Indicted for Perjury. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, told special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald that he first learned from NBC News reporter Tim Russert of the identity of Central Intelligence Agency operative Valerie Plame, the wife of former ambassador and Bush administration critic Joseph Wilson, one person said. Russert has testified before a federal grand jury that he didn't tell Libby of Plame's identity, the person said. Libby was subsequently indicted on charges of obstruction of justice, perjury and making false statements in the CIA leak investigation [[Bloomberg](#), 7/22/05; [AP](#), 10/28/05]

ROVE SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW WHO PLAME WAS WHEN OTHERS SAY HE DID

August 2004: Rove Claimed He Did Not Know Who Plame Was At The Time Of The Leak. In August of 2004, facing questions of his role in the Plame leak scandal, Rove denied his involvement, saying that he did not even know who Plame was at the time of the leak. “Well, I'll repeat what I said to ABC News when this whole thing broke some number of months ago. I didn't know her name and didn't leak her name.” [[CNN](#), 7/4/05]

July 15, 2005: Rove Said He Learned Plame's Name From Novak, Novak Told A Different Story. White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove told Fitzgerald that he first learned the identity of the CIA agent from syndicated columnist Robert Novak, according a person familiar with the matter. Novak, who was first to report Plame's name and connection to Wilson, has given a somewhat different version to the special prosecutor. Robert Luskin, Rove's attorney, declined in an interview to comment. [[Bloomberg](#), 7/22/05]

July 2005: Rove's Account Differed From Cooper's. “There is a discrepancy between accounts given by Rove and [Time](#) reporter Matthew Cooper. [Rove] mentioned Wilson's wife -- though not by name -- in a July 11, 2003, conversation with Cooper, the reporter said. Rove, 55, says that Cooper called him to talk about welfare reform and the Wilson connection was mentioned later, in passing. Cooper wrote in [Time](#) magazine that he told the grand jury he never discussed welfare reform with Rove in that call.” [[Bloomberg](#), 7/22/05]

AND DESPITE ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS TO HIDE IT, WILSON WAS RIGHT

Three Separate Reports Debunked Niger Transaction Prior to State of the Union. In addition to Ambassador Wilson's conclusion debunking the Niger arms uranium sale, Barbro Owens-Kirkpatrick, US Ambassador to Niger, and her staff had already concluded the intelligence was false by the time Wilson arrived in the country. The U.S. embassy had alerted Washington of those conclusions. Separately, Four-Star Marine Gen. Carlton W. Fulford Jr. had met with Niger president in February 2002 to check the security of the country's uranium. Fulford reported that he was “convinced it was not an issue,” and passed his findings to Gen. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs. When asked about Bush's claim in the State of the Union, Former Ambassador Joseph Wilson said, “I believed, at the time [I] effectively debunked the Niger arms uranium sale.” [[Washington Post](#), 7/15/03; Joseph Wilson Op-Ed, [New York Times](#), 7/6/03; [The New Republic](#), 6/30/03; Nicholas Kristoff Op-Ed, [New York Times](#), 6/13/03; [The New Yorker](#), 3/31/03; NBC “Meet the Press,” 7/6/03]

White House Was Repeatedly Warned Not To Cite Niger Report. In March 2002, both the CIA and State Department learned that evidence linking Iraq to Niger was unfounded. In October, CIA Director Tenet personally intervened with Condoleezza Rice's deputy National Security Advisor to have the charge removed from Bush's speech to the nation. Rice herself was sent a memo debunking the claim. In January, just days before Bush uttered the false charge CIA officials tried again to remove the language, but the White House insisted it remain—with added the caveat that they had received the information from British sources. [Bush State of the Union, 1/28/03; [Time](#), 7/21/03 Issue; Hadley/Bartlett Gaggle, 7/22/03; [New York Times](#), 7/13/03; [Washington Post](#), 7/20/03; [NPR](#), 6/19/03]