

Dick Cheney Is Caught In Yet Another Lie

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Vice President Dick Cheney has been lying for months about his role in peddling fake “intelligence” to sell the Iraq War to a gullible Congress and American public. On several occasions, he has denied that he was receiving “raw” intelligence from Ahmed Chalabi’s Iraqi National Congress, and using that “unvetted” fakery to shout down military and intelligence community professionals who disputed his claims that Iraq under Saddam Hussein represented an “imminent threat” to the United States and its allies. Drawing on disinformation willingly served up by Chalabi’s army of “defectors,” Cheney led the Bush Administration Big Lie campaign, charging that Iraq possessed arsenals of biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, was on the verge of building nuclear weapons, and was behind the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, through its alleged sponsorship of al-Qaeda.

When experienced analysts at the CIA and other intelligence agencies continued to produce assessments, blowing holes in his Chalabi-fed disinformation, the Vice President, his chief of staff Lewis “Scooter” Libby, and Defense Policy Board “Chicken-hawk” and former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, stormed the barricades at Langley and directly confronted Agency intelligence officers, demanding that they fall in line.

Now, *Newsweek* magazine has obtained a June 2002 Iraqi National Congress memorandum to a U.S. Senate committee, which identified two top Cheney aides as the official “U.S. government recipients” of intelligence, generated by an INC team funded by the U.S. State Department. The memo reported that, under the program, “defectors’ reports and raw intelligence are cultivated and analyzed,” before being passed

on to the designated officials.

The two Cheney aides named in the INC memo, written by Entifadh Qunbar, were John Hannah and William Luti.

Hannah, a former analyst at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), the think-tank arm of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), is one of Cheney’s top Mideast policy aides. He was also the organizer of a series of policy seminars at which Chalabi and Dr. Bernard Lewis, the British Intelligence author of the “clash of civilizations” insanity, were brought to the White House and to the Vice President’s official residence, to pitch for a U.S. overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Luti may be fairly described as Dick Cheney’s “Ollie North.” A retired Navy captain and onetime military aide to Speaker of the House Gingrich, Luti began the Bush “43” Administration as a top aide to Cheney. After Sept. 11, 2001, Luti was deployed into the Pentagon, to take charge of the Near East South Asia (NESA) policy shop, under Doug Feith, the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy who is the Bush Administration’s most outspoken follower of the late Vladimir Jabotinsky, the Likud godfather whom Israeli founder David Ben Gurion denounced as “Vladimir Hitler,” for his unabashed fascist views.

Numerous Pentagon and Congressional sources say that Luti transformed the nearly invisible NESA unit into a secret parallel intelligence and operations unit, dedicated to drawing the United States into a war with Iraq, Syria, Iran, and a string of other “axis of evil” regimes, stretching half-way around the globe. At the peak of the Iraq War planning, the NESA office, which housed the Office of Special Plans (OSP), had as many as 100 private contractors on the pad, most of them

leading fixtures in the Washington neo-conservative think-tank scene.

While formally under the supervision of Feith, who also, along with Richard Perle and David Wurmser (now another Mideast policy aide to Cheney) authored the 1996 "A Clean Break" war plan prepared for Israel's Likud Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Luti, in fact, reported directly to the Vice President's chief of staff and chief national security aide, Scooter Libby. Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski, the retired Air Force intelligence officer who served in the NESA office for eight months in 2002-03, confirmed that at staff meetings, Luti made it clear that he was working for Cheney and Libby.

Colonel Kwiatkowski, who retired from military service earlier this year, has now written a three-part series of articles on her harrowing experience in Luti's world of neo-con and Likud ideologues, which began appearing in the Dec. 1, 2003 issue of *The American Conservative*. She concluded Part I of her account with a chilling condemnation: "By August, I was morally and intellectually frustrated by my powerlessness against what increasingly appeared to be a philosophical hijacking of the Pentagon. Indeed, I had sworn an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, but perhaps we were never really expected to take it all that seriously."

Tenet Speaks Out

Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet, who has personally bent over backwards to shield President Bush from the charges that he took the United States to war on the basis of disinformation, has, nevertheless, told members of the Congressional intelligence committees that he believes that the Luti unit, and its Office of Special Plans (OSP), the Iraq War planning cell in Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's office, violated Federal law, by conducting overseas covert operations, without Presidential authorization.

One clue about those suspected illegal covert operations surfaced in the *New York Times*, in a Dec. 7 article by James Risen, detailing secret contacts between OSP personnel and discredited Iran-Contra figure, Iranian arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar.

In December 2001, Ghorbanifar made contact with former Iran-Contra operative Michael Ledeen, now at the American Enterprise Institute and, reportedly, a "personal service contract" employee of the OSP. Ledeen subsequently arranged a series of secret meetings between Ghorbanifar and NESA Iran Desk officer Larry Franklin and Pentagon Office of Net Assessments official Harold Rhode, a close ally of Ledeen and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. Ghorbanifar and Ledeen both make no secret of the fact that they are promoting a U.S. covert operations program to destabilize and overthrow the Islamic regime in Tehran. And neo-con think-tank allies of Ledeen, Rhode, and company, including Daniel Pipes, have been aggressively promoting the idea that



Vice President Cheney has led the Big Lie campaign about supposed Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Two of his top aides, William Luti and John Hannah, are now exposed for funnelling disinformation from Iraqi exiles, into the Bush White House.

the United States should employ the Mujahideen E-Khalq (MEK), an Iraq-based group of Iranian terrorists, formally on the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, as a covert destabilization force, targetting the regime in Tehran.

The question still on the agenda of Senate intelligence committee investigators is: Did NESA/OSP and other allied neo-con units at the Pentagon and in the Office of the Vice President, engage in unauthorized covert operations against Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and other targets?

Indictment of El Hage

That question will be further scrutinized by Congress, as the result of yet another OSP operation gone astray. On Dec. 11, the *New York Times* reported that, on Nov. 6, the Department of Homeland Security informed a Lebanese arms dealer and wanna-be head of "liberated Lebanon," Imad El Hage, that he had been indicted on illegal weapons possession charges. El Hage had been detained at Dulles International Airport in Virginia on Jan. 28, after Transportation Security Administration inspectors found a 45-caliber gun and four stun-guns in his luggage. Although he was allowed to travel by plane to Beirut, a criminal case was opened, and several months later, El Hage was indicted.

Simultaneous to that indictment, El Hage's contact point

in the OSP, Michael Maloof, was suspended with pay from his Pentagon job, and had his security clearances stripped. Sources report that El Hage and Maloof were working together on schemes to install Gen. Michel Aoun and others in power in Beirut, following a U.S. and/or Israeli military attack on Syria, aimed at overthrowing the Ba'ath regime there, and removing Syrian forces from Lebanon. This scheme, which Pentagon and Cheniac neo-cons planned to implement, immediately following the Iraq invasion, came right out of the pages of the Perle, Feith, Wurmser "A Clean Break."

A number of U.S. intelligence community sources have told this author that the Maloof probe goes beyond his dealings with El Hage, and may involve the passing of U.S. war plans against Iraq to Israel. The sources point out that, in the 1980s, Maloof served in the Pentagon under Perle and Steven Bryen, and was suspected, at the time, of ties to Jonathan Jay Pollard, who was convicted of spying for Israel.

The El Hage indictment puts a fresh spotlight on the OSP machinations against Syria and Lebanon, at a time when there is growing action in the U.S. Congress to prevent Cheney and company from burying the Iraq intelligence hoax scandal. On Dec. 11, it was announced that Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), the ranking member of the House Government Reform Committee, will be opening a hotline, to solicit intelligence community whistleblowers to come forward, with new evidence of the falsification of intelligence prior to the Iraq War. According to a news story posted on www.TomPaine.com, an Internet journal, by Robert Dreyfuss, Waxman is to announce the hotline in a letter to committee chairman Rep. Thomas Davis (R-Va.). The same letter will call on Davis to open a full committee probe into who leaked the identity of Valerie Plame, the CIA "non-official cover" officer and wife of former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Wilson. Plame's name was leaked to syndicated columnist Robert Novak in July by "two senior Administration officials," in a flagrant attempt to muzzle Wilson, a critic of the Iraq War, who was sent by the CIA to Niger in February 2002, to probe what later proved to be forged documents, purporting that Iraq was seeking uranium ore to make nuclear bombs.

The January 2004 issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine contains a feature story on the Wilson-Plame leak, which reports that Vice President Cheney began scheming against Wilson in March 2003—shortly after International Atomic Energy

Agency head Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei told the United Nations Security Council that the Niger uranium documents were shoddy forgeries. Cheney's office officially denies the report, but intelligence community sources insist that Cheney's office launched the "Get Wilson" campaign, months before the former Ambassador published his eyewitness account of the mission to Niger in the *New York Times* in early July. According to one source, members of the Defense Policy Board may have played a role leaking Valerie Plame's identity.

One senior Congressional staffer who insists on anonymity, bluntly declared that, when the truth about OSP comes out, it will make the Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s look like child's play.

Targetted Assassinations

As the Vice President was being hit with the latest evidence of his lying to the Congress and the American public about the fabrication of intelligence to get support for the Iraq War, another major scandal was hitting the Bush-Cheney team: American military collusion with Israel, to conduct "targetted assassinations" in Iraq.

The Dec. 8 issue of *New Yorker* magazine featured a story by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, revealing that Israeli commandos are training U.S. Special Forces teams at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and in Iraq, to carry out targetted assassinations of suspected members of the Iraqi resistance. The idea that the U.S. military is adopting Israel's illegal, discredited, and ineffective "pre-emptive assassination" tactics (euphemistically called "pre-emptive manhunting" in Rumsfeld-speak) has outraged many military professionals.

This morphing of U.S. and Israeli personnel and counter-insurgency methods also leads back to the same Cheney-led Pentagon outhouse.

As reported by the *Washington Times*, and eyewitnessed by Colonel Kwiatkowski, shortly after 9/11, Undersecretary of Defense Feith began a series of secret meetings—first, in Israel, and later at his Pentagon office—with Israel's Interior Minister Uzi Landau and Gen. David Tzur, to establish a permanent interface office between American and Israeli counter-terror warriors and spooks. Under the program, Pentagon lawyers began meeting with Israeli jurists who had come up with the legal rationale for Israel's targetted assassination policy—a policy soundly denounced by the U.S. State Department, but now, apparently, adopted by the Cheney crowd.

It is widely reported that Feith maintains his job at the Pentagon because Cheney and Libby have stepped in to prevent his being fired on more than one occasion. A retired U.S. intelligence official described the situation: "The real axis of evil runs between Lewis Libby and Doug Feith—and even [White House political advisor] Karl Rove is aware of this. But to do anything about it, means taking on Dick Cheney."

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