

The Coming Senate Battle: Open the Porter Goss File

Part 1, by Jeffrey Steinberg, with Michele Steinberg and Scott Thompson

In his damning book on the Bush-Cheney Administration, *Worse Than Watergate*, former Nixon White House General Counsel John W. Dean reported that Vice President Dick Cheney has been obsessed for decades with the mid-1970s Church and Pike Committees, whose pioneering work led to the first serious Congressional oversight of the intelligence community. As far as the Vice President is concerned, those investigations, and the Congressional oversight committees that emerged from the process, represented a dark moment, in which the powers of secret government were undermined. As Dean put it: “Cheney has long believed that Congress has no business telling Presidents what to do, particularly in national security matters.”

Cheney’s refusal to turn over a shred of paper from his White House Energy Task Force; his secret intelligence organization buried in the Pentagon bureaucracy; and his trips to CIA headquarters to stare down analysts who dared to challenge his Iraq WMD Big Lies, all underscore the Veep’s obsession with government-by-secret-cabal.

It is no wonder that Cheney’s choice as the new Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) is Rep. Porter Goss (R-Fla.). Goss not only presided over a vicious partisan coverup of the Iraq pre-war intelligence fraud—a fraud run out of Cheney’s office—through his position as chairman of the House Select Committee on Intelligence. Goss’s own career as a 1960s-era Central Intelligence Agency Clandestine Service officer is a throwback to the pre-Church Committee, pre-Watergate days, when the intelligence community, under the Allen Dulles/James Angleton legacy, ran amok.

Playing Politics With National Security

Sources in the U.S. intelligence community and the Congress identify three reasons that Cheney chose Goss for the

DCI post, and is now intent on ramming his confirmation through the Senate immediately after Labor Day.

First, the White House is desperate to “plug the leaks” at the CIA. The Agency has been scapegoated by the White House and its Congressional toadies, like Goss and California Republican Duncan Hunter, for the 9/11 attacks and for the failure to find the so-called Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Senior career intelligence officers are furious, according to the sources, at the White House’s blame game, and they do not intend to sit by and allow this propaganda scam to go unchallenged. The fact that evidence points to Cheney as the culprit behind the July 2003 leaking of the identity of CIA “non-official cover” officer Valerie Plame to columnist Robert Novak, only deepens the intelligence community’s fury at the Bush White House. And Goss’s personal role in attempting to prevent an independent counsel probe into the Plame leak just adds to the volatility of the issue.

The spy community knows that evidence easily accessible in the public domain reveals that the President, the Vice President, and the Attorney General repeatedly ignored CIA and FBI warnings about an imminent terrorist attack on U.S. soil in the Spring-Summer 2001, including the now-famous Aug. 6, 2001 Presidential Daily Briefing item, talking about al-Qaeda hijacking plots and surveillance of targets in Washington and New York. Likewise, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence’s recent report documented that the majority of intelligence community analysts disputed the Iraq WMD threat; and former DCI George Tenet told an audience at Georgetown University earlier this year that Iraq “never posed an imminent threat” to the United States—and he told Bush and Cheney that on repeated occasions.

When the CIA General Counsel rushed through approval of a book, *Imperial Hubris*, by a senior Agency counterter-



This picture, taken in Mexico City on Jan. 22, 1963, shows agents in “Operation 40,” the CIA’s assassination squad deployed against Fidel Castro. By some accounts, a young Porter Goss is seated between Felix Rodriguez (front left) and later CIA narco-pilot Barry Seal. The photograph was produced by Seal’s widow shortly after his gangland-style assassination in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

rorism analyst, writing anonymously, which tore into the Administration’s failed Iraq and Afghanistan policies, Cheney and company moved to pre-empt further damaging material from surfacing from the Agency—by naming Goss. Goss’s first mission will be to plug the leaks—at least through November.

Second, the Bush-Cheney campaign is growing worried that the President could lose the must-win state of Florida in November, and the Goss nomination is aimed at bolstering enthusiasm among the Cuban-American right-wing community in Miami for a second Bush-Cheney term. Goss is the darling of the southern Florida right wing, and has been, dating back to his CIA days from 1961-71, when he participated in the efforts to assassinate or overthrow Fidel Castro in Havana.

Third, and most important for Cheney, Goss is the personification of the rogue spook, serving at the pleasure of the President, and behind the back of the Congress and the American people. In Cheney’s warped mind, Goss is going to turn the clock back to the bad-old-days before Watergate and intelligence oversight.

JM/WAVE and Mongoose

In 1975, the Church Committee investigating the activities of the U.S. intelligence community issued its final report. Among the revelations contained in the multi-volume document were the first unclassified accounts of the CIA’s program

to assassinate Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. “United States government personnel plotted to kill Castro from 1960 to 1965,” the report stated. “American underworld figures and Cubans hostile to Castro were used in these plots, and were provided encouragement and material support by the United States.”

Those anti-Castro operations were run out of a large Miami CIA station, under the code name JM/WAVE. At the height of JM/WAVE, the station employed over 200 CIA officers, and ran a network of over 2,200 Cuban exiles. It maintained an armada of boats, for raids on Cuba, and a small fleet of aircraft for other missions. One sub-feature of the anti-Castro efforts, Operation Mongoose, involved assassination plots against the Cuban leader.

Porter Goss was a young CIA officer assigned to JM/WAVE.

Goss had, by his own accounts, been recruited to the CIA while in his third year at Yale University. His two years of military service were, in all likelihood, actually CIA assignments. In 1961, Goss was officially brought into the CIA and sent to JM/WAVE. He later would continue to participate in the anti-Castro operations, based out of CIA stations in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Later, Goss was sent to London and then Paris, where he was involved in the infiltration of labor organizations, until he developed a near-fatal infection and was forced, officially, to retire from the spy world.

In his role in JM/WAVE, Goss served with some of the CIA’s most hardened Cold Warriors, including Miami Station Chief Theodore G. Shackley, later a central figure in the Iran/Contra debacle; Felix Rodriguez, another leading Iran-Contra player; and Frank Sturgis, later of Watergate break-in infamy.

Indeed, from the Bay of Pigs and the Operation Mongoose Castro assassination plots of the 1960s, to the Watergate Plumbers Unit of the 1970s, to the Iran-Contra narco-financed insurgency of the 1980s, this circle of right-wing CIA operators and closely allied Cuban exiles, has represented an ugly stain on the American political landscape. Is this what Porter Goss brings to the table?

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence cannot avoid the details of Goss’s CIA career, in deliberating on his nomination.