

The Coming Indictment Of Dick Cheney And the Neo-Cons

by Jeffrey Steinberg

As we go to press, Americans are preparing to vote in the Nov. 2 elections. Regardless of the outcome of the Presidential race, during the immediate days and weeks ahead, Dick Cheney will finally be facing the music. The Vice President has presided over one of the most corrupt Administrations in American history, and the proximity of the Presidential elections has postponed—but not quashed—a string of Federal grand jury and Congressional probes of the Vice President and his neo-con allies in the Pentagon and in his own “shadow national security council,” housed in the Office of the Vice President, and headed by Cheney’s chief of staff and alter ego, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby.

Among Cheney’s most recent election-eve damage-control efforts: the suppression of a Central Intelligence Agency Inspector General’s report on intelligence failures, leading up to the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. According to recent reports in *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, newly installed CIA Director Porter Goss, a partisan Republican Cheney pick, put the kibosh on the release of the IG report to Congress, despite the fact that the document was completed in June. According to *Los Angeles Times* editorial writer Robert Scheer, the CIA study names the names of top government officials who sat on key intelligence leads prior to the attacks. Scheer quoted one unnamed intelligence official: “It is infuriating that a report which shows that high-level people were not doing their jobs in a satisfactory manner before 9/11 is being suppressed. The report is potentially very embarrassing for the administration, because it makes it look like they weren’t interested in terrorism before 9/11, or in holding people in the government responsible afterwards.”

The top Bush Administration official who ignored pre-9/11 warnings and suppressed legislation aimed at creating a Homeland Security Department *prior* to the Pentagon and World Trade Center attacks was none other than Vice President Cheney, who was appointed by President Bush in May 2001 to head up a White House task force on terrorism. According to former National Security Council



On the very eve of the Presidential election, Vice President Dick Cheney sought to suppress a CIA report on how the Administration ignored warnings from the Intelligence Community of a terrorist threat, prior to 9/11. The bill of indictment against Cheney is growing longer and longer.

counter-terrorism czar Richard Clarke, that task force never held a single meeting, prior to the 9/11 attacks.

The suppression of the IG report has provoked bipartisan anger from the ranking members of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.) and Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.), who wrote a letter of protest to Goss over the delay until after Nov. 2. More recently, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), the ranking Democrat on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, also wrote to Goss, protesting the stall.

The IG report was the result of a 17-month probe by an 11-person CIA team. Another CIA official told the *Los Angeles Times*, “No previous director of CIA has ever tried to stop the inspector general from releasing a report to the Congress, in this case a report requested by Congress.” Indeed, *Newsweek* reported that, following the publication of the Scheer article, Goss’s top aides ordered the Office of Security to launch a probe into the leak. Senior U.S. intelligence sources have told *EIR* that Cheney hand-picked Goss to take the CIA post with one over-riding mandate: *Block any pre-election leaks from within the CIA bureaucracy.*

‘Minister of Disinformation’

Adding to the pattern of exposés of Cheney interference in the national security intelligence process, Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, released a 46-page report on Oct. 21, documenting the fabrication of intelligence prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. While the Levin report’s findings centered on the

office of Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, which created an illegal parallel intelligence unit, outside the purview of the Intelligence Community (IC), to peddle a stream of disinformation on Iraq’s non-existent ties to al-Qaeda, the report highlighted the personal role of Cheney. Sen. John Kerry recently aptly called Cheney “the Chief Minister of Disinformation” in the Bush Administration.

Senator Kerry knows, all too well, the personal role that the Vice President played in marching America into the Iraq quagmire. As the Senator has confided to several colleagues, it was a personal visit by the Vice President to Senator Kerry that convinced the latter to vote in favor of the Iraq war resolution in October 2002, which gave President Bush an unconstitutional Congressional green light to launch a needless and disastrous “preventive war.” Vice President Cheney lied to Senator Kerry, and, presumably, to scores of other hesitant legislators, that the Administration had hard evidence that Saddam Hussein had an advanced nuclear weapons program, and that it was the threat of a nuclear-armed Iraq that justified the preventive war to unseat Saddam Hussein and capture his supposed “vast arsenal” of weapons of mass destruction, before the “proof” emerged in the form of a nuclear mushroom cloud.

‘You Can Run, But You Can’t Hide’

On Oct. 28, just five days before the Presidential election, the FBI announced a criminal investigation, to determine whether Halliburton Co., which was chaired for five years by Dick Cheney (1995-2000), illegally got billions of dollars in

no-bid contracts from the Bush Administration, to run Iraq's oil sector, following the U.S. invasion and occupation. The criminal probe, touching on Cheney, was launched in response to allegations by Army Corps of Engineers senior contracting officer Bunnatine Greenhouse, who charged that she came under pressure from her superiors to drop opposition to Halliburton's five-year no-bid contract. The Greenhouse charges were featured in *Time* magazine, on Oct. 24.

In a letter to the acting Secretary of the Army, Greenhouse's attorney, Michael Kohn, charged that Gen. Robert Griffin and other top Army Corps of Engineers officials admonished her for questioning the Halliburton contract, which was approved on the eve of the March 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. The letter detailed a February 2003 meeting at the Pentagon, attended by top Halliburton executives and Army officials, at which the \$7 billion no-bid contract was discussed. Greenhouse objected to the presence of the Halliburton executives, and to the terms of the contract itself, arguing that the no-bid deal should be restricted to one year, and then opened to competitive bidding. The next day, she received a copy of the five-year contract, unchanged, and was ordered by superiors to sign it. According to Kohn's letter, which was also provided to Congressional offices, Greenhouse was threatened with demotion, for raising a stink about the Halliburton deal.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the House Government Reform Committee—which is now investigating billions of dollars in other Halliburton no-bid contracts under the United Nations-administered Oil for Food Program, and its successor Coalition Provisional Authority-administered Development Fund for Iraq—issued a statement on the Greenhouse case: “These charges,” he told *Time*, “undercut months of assertions by Administration officials that the Halliburton contract was on the level.”

Now FBI agents are set to interview Greenhouse and other Pentagon officials about the deal. They are also gathering documents from Army offices in Texas and other locations, all related to the Halliburton no-bid contracts. Associated Press reported on Oct. 28 that “The line of inquiry expands an earlier FBI investigation into whether Halliburton overcharged taxpayers for fuel in Iraq, and it elevates to a criminal matter the election-year question of whether the Bush Administration showed favoritism to Vice President Dick Cheney's former company.”

Indeed, documents already released by the Army Corps of Engineers confirm that Cheney Chief of Staff Libby was kept abreast of the Halliburton contract status on an ongoing basis.

The Halliburton Axis of Evil

Iraq is not the only case of Cheney-Halliburton corruption, currently under criminal investigation. Two other potential Halliburton crimes, both carried out while Dick Cheney was the company's CEO, are the subjects of Justice Depart-

ment inquiries, U.S. Federal grand juries, and foreign criminal probes.

The first case involves \$180 million in bribes, allegedly paid to Nigerian government officials by a consortium headed by Halliburton, which was seeking a monopoly on natural gas development in that oil- and gas-rich West African country. The case is being investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Securities and Exchange Commission, French public prosecutor Renaud Van Ruymbeke, and the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crime Commission.

The French probe not only is targeting the bribes to Nigerian government officials; it also is focussing on \$132 million, passed by the Halliburton-led consortium to British attorney Jeffrey Tesler, some of which, French investigators believe, may have been laundered back into the United States through offshore accounts, for use by the Republican Party in the 2000 elections. According to a report prepared by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), titled “Ten Halliburton Scandals: Ten Billion in U.S. Contracts, Zero Senate Hearings”: French magistrate Van Ruymbeke “has said that embezzlement charges could ultimately be filed against Cheney himself in a French court. In 2000, France joined the United States and more than 30 other countries in outlawing bribery of foreign public officials under the auspices of a convention negotiated through the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.”

Another explosive probe of Halliburton deals with the company's creation of a fictitious offshore subsidiary, to do business in Iran, in violation of a number of Federal statutes, including the Trading with the Enemy Act. In July 2004, after three years of investigation by the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, the case was referred to the Justice Department, which opened a criminal grand jury investigation in Houston, Texas.

At the center of the controversy is Halliburton Products and Services Ltd., a company founded in the Cayman Islands—outside the reach of U.S. laws, banning certain economic cooperation with Iran, a country on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism, and one of three “rogue states” identified by President George W. Bush in his January 2002 State of the Union address as part of the “Axis of Evil.”

A January 2004 investigation by CBS “60 Minutes” producer Leslie Stahl confirmed that the Halliburton Cayman Islands subsidiary, in fact, doesn't exist. It has no employees and no office on the island—merely a letter drop which forwards all mail back to Halliburton headquarters in Houston. Its only operations are run out of the Dubai offices of Kellogg Brown & Root, the wholly owned unit of the American Halliburton Co.

Senator Lautenberg has spearheaded the Senate probe into Cheney and Halliburton, and he dubbed the Iran dealings, which today are up to over \$40 million a year in sales and services to the Islamic Republic, “serious and willful viola-

tions” of U.S. sanctions laws. “It’s unconscionable that an American company would skirt the law to help Iran generate revenues.”

Not to be forgotten is the fact that Cheney’s “golden parachute” from Halliburton yielded him tens of millions of dollars, that he still receives annual deferred payments from Halliburton, and he holds 440,000 stock options in the firm—while claiming that he has been divested of any Halliburton interests since becoming Vice President.

The Valerie Plame Case

Beyond his Halliburton corruption, the Vice President is also in the eye of another storm—with serious potential criminal consequences. In July 2003, syndicated columnist Robert Novak exposed the identity of an undercover CIA officer, Valerie Plame, who happened to also be the wife of Ambassador Joseph Wilson. In February 2002, at the behest of the CIA, Ambassador Wilson, who served in both Iraq and Niger during a distinguished career as a foreign service officer, travelled to the African state, to probe reports that Iraq was seeking a large quantity of “yellowcake,” a uranium precursor used in nuclear bombs. The Wilson trip came directly as the result of a query by Vice President Cheney, about alleged Niger government documents obtained by the Italian secret service, SISMI, pointing to the Iraq-Niger yellowcake deals.

Wilson concluded that the reports were false, and his findings were passed by the CIA to senior White House officials. Ultimately, in early March 2003, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head Dr. Mohammed ElBaradei revealed that the Niger documents, which had been subsequently obtained by the CIA and shared with IAEA analysts, were shoddy forgeries.

Several days after Dr. ElBaradei made these revelations at a United Nations Security Council session, Joe Wilson appeared on CNN TV, and reminded Administration officials that they had some knowledge about the Niger yellowcake affair.

According to *EIR*’s most well-informed government sources, the Wilson TV appearance triggered a meeting in the Vice President’s Office, to “get Joe Wilson.” When Wilson penned an op-ed for the *New York Times* in early July 2003, detailing his Niger mission, the Novak leak appeared targeting his wife, a career CIA “non-official cover” officer, involved in sensitive overseas work, tracking weapons of mass destruction.

Senior CIA officers were incensed that Novak openly boasted that he had been given Plame’s name by two senior White House officials. It is one thing when an enemy spy, like Aldrich Ames or Robert Hanssen, provides the names of undercover U.S. intelligence officers. It is another thing entirely, when top White House officials reveal such information, in an act of political revenge.

After months of stalling by Attorney General John Ash-

croft, evidence surfaced of Ashcroft’s long-standing ties to one of the White House leak suspects, Karl Rove. Ashcroft was forced to recuse himself from the case, and the Deputy Attorney General, Robert Comey, immediately appointed an independent counsel, Chicago U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, to find and prosecute the leakers.

Sources have informed *EIR* that the Plame leak probe has zeroed in on Cheney’s office. They indicate that a top aide to the Vice President, John Hannah, has already confessed to leaking the name to reporters—at the behest of Cheney Chief of Staff Libby. One remaining question is whether Libby acted on his own, or on the orders of Cheney or some other White House higher-up.

The Fitzpatrick grand jury has been reportedly stalled, in the run-up to the Presidential elections, but one well-placed intelligence source reported that, if Bush-Cheney are re-elected, “You will see the Administration swamped by Watergate-like scandals, including the Plame affair.”

Beyond Dick Cheney’s own looming day in court, many of the Administration’s leading neo-con officials and fellow-travellers, are facing an array of scandals, some involving espionage. Sources report that several top officials in the office of Undersecretary of Defense Feith are under investigation for leaking national security secrets to Israel and Iran. Among the reported targets of these probes are : Harold Rhode, David Wurmser, Michael Maloof, and Col. William Brunner. Feith underling Larry Franklin is the subject of an ongoing spy probe, centered around classified documents he allegedly passed to Israeli Embassy officials, via the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the semi-official Israeli lobby in the U.S.A.

These investigations are deadly serious, and they must be completed—regardless of the outcome on Nov. 2. Cheney and his neo-con allies have caused near-irreversible damage to America’s standing in the world. If they are guilty of criminal acts, including passing classified material to foreign governments, trading with the enemy, violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and leaking the identities of undercover U.S. intelligence officers, they must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Such actions would go a long way toward repairing America’s standing around the globe—and would go a long way towards assuring that the neo-con menace does not crawl out of its hole anytime in the near future.

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