

A New 'Halloween Massacre' Will Sink Cheney-Rumsfeld

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On Oct. 31, 1975, President Gerald Ford announced a Cabinet shakeup that would soon come to be known as the "Halloween Massacre." Ford fired National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, replacing him with Gen. Brent Scowcroft (Kissinger retained his post as Secretary of State). He fired CIA Director William Colby and replaced him with George H.W. Walker Bush, and he fired Defense Secretary James Schlesinger and replaced him with his White House Chief of Staff, Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld's deputy, Richard Cheney, moved up to be the Chief of Staff.

Thirty years later, another "Halloween Massacre" is on the verge of taking place—this one, far less to the liking of Rumsfeld and Cheney. With indictments of top White House officials imminent, Lyndon LaRouche has declared that the "post-Cheney era" in American politics has already begun. LaRouche has announced a Washington, D.C. webcast for Nov. 16, at which he will discuss the profound global policy implications of the fall of the most powerful Vice President in American history; a Vice President whom honest future historians will perhaps equate with another treasonous holder of that high office, Aaron Burr.

The Dam Has Broken

As we go to press, Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald has not yet announced any indictments in the Valerie Plame leak investigation, which he launched in December 2003. But such indictments are believed to be just days away, and are expected to include, at a minimum, Deputy White House Chief of Staff Karl Rove and Vice President Cheney's own chief of staff and chief national security advisor, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby. However, sources say that a number of senior White House officials are scrambling, at the last minute, to negotiate

plea deals, and therefore, the precise outcome of the grand jury deliberations cannot yet be predicted.

Among the growing list of Bush-Cheney White House officials rumored to have "flipped" are Cheney's deputy national security aide John Hannah and Middle East advisor David Wurmser. According to one senior Republican Party strategist, even Libby has been advised by his longtime law partner and mentor Leonard Garment, that Cheney is "too far gone to save," and Libby should think about limiting the damage to his own hide.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.)—who makes no bones about the fact that he would gladly replace Dick Cheney as the "white knight" Vice President, salvaging Bush's incredible shrinking Presidency—was on the West Coast in early October, raising funds from big-bucks Republican donors, and his message was: The Bush-Cheney Administration is going down, and only President Bush stands a possible chance of surviving the massacre.

One clear sign that Fitzgerald is about to move against the "Cheney cabal" is the fact that, on Oct. 21, the Office of Special Counsel launched a website (www.usdoj.gov/usao/iln/osc/index.html), to provide the public with easy access to information about its actions.

The Fitzgerald case revolves around top White House officials, who, in June-July 2003, provided at least six journalists with the identity of Plame, a CIA career officer whose status as a "non-official cover" agent was "top secret."

Plame is the wife of former Ambassador Joseph Wilson IV, who conducted a mission to Niger on behalf of the CIA in February 2002. Wilson's assignment: to check out intelligence, provided by the Italian secret service SISMI in the form of Niger government documents, that Saddam Hussein



was secretly attempting to purchase uranium to build a nuclear bomb. Wilson's mission came as the result of intensive pressure on the CIA by Vice President Cheney and "Scooter" Libby, to come up with evidence to justify a U.S. military invasion of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Saddam's quest for nuclear weapons would be Cheney's chief propaganda weapon in bludgeoning support from Congress and the public for an unwarranted, disastrous war.

Wilson came back from Niger and reported that he found no evidence that such Iraq-Niger deals had taken place or were being contemplated. His findings were buttressed by similar probes by the U.S. Ambassador, and by a U.S. Marine general who made a similar fact-finding trip to Niger, on behalf of the Pentagon.

Nearly two years into his probe, Fitzgerald, according to a wide range of Washington sources, has amassed a powerful case against Rove, Libby, and other members of the White House Iraq Group (WHIG), a "plumbers unit" comprised of senior White House staffers, whose mission was to lay the propaganda foundations for an Iraq invasion, and to counter any opposition to the war, before, during, and after the invasion.

WHIG was launched in July-August 2002 at the initiative of White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card, and included, in addition to Rove and Libby, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, her deputy (now National Security Advisor) Stephen Hadley, Karen Hughes, and a half-dozen others. But, as one former intelligence officer put it, "Cheney was the chairman of the WHIG." In recent days, as the current phase of his investigation entered end-game, Special Counsel Fitzgerald reportedly issued a series of interrogatories, seeking details about Cheney's participation in WHIG meetings.

Institutional Action

Fitzgerald's probe, instigated by CIA pressure on the Bush Administration to bring the Plame leakers to justice, is

part of a larger U.S. institutional move to oust the Cheney cabal. Leading military, intelligence, and diplomatic figures of stature have taken the gloves off against Cheney, Rumsfeld, and the neo-con apparatus.

Following a published call by Gen. William Odom (USA-ret.) for a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, on Oct. 19, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson (USA-ret.) delivered a powerful attack on Cheney and Rumsfeld by name, at a Washington, D.C. event sponsored by the New America Foundation. A 31-year Army veteran, Wilkerson spent 16 years serving under Gen. Colin Powell, including four years as Powell's State Department chief of staff.

Wilkerson charged that what he saw in the Bush 43 Administration "was a cabal between the Vice President of the United States, Richard Cheney, and the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, on critical issues that made decisions that the bureaucracy did not know were being made" (see accompanying article).

The Odom and Wilkerson verbal assaults on Cheney and Rumsfeld have been complemented by a non-stop barrage of media leaks, intended to foster a political climate where Cheney is forced to resign—right away.

Niger Documents Revisited

A number of well-placed sources have confirmed to *EIR* that, in recent days, both Fitzgerald and Paul McNulty, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, have received copies of a confidential Italian parliamentary investigation into the origins of the forged Niger government documents, which were the source of the SISMI Iraq-Niger uranium allegations. Reportedly, the document names several Americans, including self-professed "universal fascist" Michael Ledeen, and former CIA Rome station chief and Iran-Contra figure Duane Clarridge, as suspected participants in the forgery plot. Ledeen has been a fixture in the postwar fascist underground in Italy, through such agencies as the Propaganda Two freemasonic lodge and the Monte Carlo Lodge.

Unfortunately for Ledeen, who is also one of the most rabid of the neo-con "permanent war" proponents at the American Enterprise Institute, his involvement in the Niger scheme may have also involved Lawrence Franklin, the Pentagon Iran desk officer, who has now pled guilty to passing classified Pentagon documents to officials of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Israeli Embassy. Ledeen travelled to Rome in December 2001 with Franklin and Pentagon neo-con Harold Rhode, and met with SISMI officials and another former Iran-Contra swindler, Manucher Ghorbanifar.

As a condition of a plea agreement he reached with McNulty on Oct. 5, Franklin agreed to cooperate with the FBI and Federal prosecutors on any investigations, including the Niger forgery case, which is being run out of the Eastern District of Virginia.