EIR National

Is Vice President Dick Cheney Losing It?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

One day after a bipartisan Senate majority passed legislation holding the White House accountable for its disastrous Iraq policy, Vice President Dick Cheney appeared at an awards dinner for former Sen. Malcolm Wallop, on Nov. 16, and used the occasion to stage a psychotic outburst against anyone daring to question the Bush Administration's motives for going to war in Iraq.

Cheney ranted: "The suggestion that's been made by some U.S. Senators that the President of the United States or any member of this Administration purposely misled the American people on pre-war intelligence is one of the most dishonest and reprehensible charges ever aired in this city. . . . Some of the most irresponsible comments have, of course, come from politicians who actually voted in favor of authorizing the use of force against Saddam Hussein. . . . Back home a few opportunists are suggesting they were sent into battle for a lie. . . . The President and I cannot prevent certain politicians from losing their memory, or their backbone."

Within moments of Cheney's over-the-top tirade, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) stood in the well of the Senate and responded, forcefully, to the Vice President's lies. "Tonight," Reid told the session, "the Vice President has come out of his bunker and is speaking at a gathering of Washington, D.C. insiders, which is closed to the press. Unfortunately, he brought his bunker mentality with him. He is repeating the same tired attacks we've heard from Administration officials over the last two weeks. In the last 24 hours, 10 of our brave soldiers have been killed in far-off Iraq. On such a night, you would think Cheney would give a speech that honors the fallen and those still fighting by laying out a strategy for success."

Senator Reid called, once again, for the Vice President to appear before the American people in a press conference to: "come clean, not to continue the pattern of deceit. . . . If he has time to talk to D.C. insiders . . . oil executives . . . and a discredited felon—Ahmed Chalabi—who is under investigation for giving this nation's most sensitive secrets to Iran, he has time to answer the questions of the American people."

Reid concluded with a warning: "Tired rhetoric and political attacks do nothing to get the job done in Iraq. America can do better."

Phase II and the Plamegate Probe

The Vice President's beast-man outburst was, if nothing else, psychologically revealing. Cheney knows that he has a great deal to hide, not the least of which is his personal role in the leaking of the identity of CIA undercover officer Valerie Plame Wilson. Speaking on MSNBC on Nov. 14, former Nixon White House Counsel John Dean predicted that Cheney would soon resign "for health reasons." Dean dissected the Oct. 28 indictment of Cheney's former chief of staff, Lewis Libby, and emphasized that the Special Counsel is targetting the Vice President, personally, for violating the Espionage Act. Dean was referring to the fact that Cheney was the person who told Libby that Valerie Plame Wilson worked in the counterproliferation division of the CIA, which is in the Directorate of Operations. Cheney and Libby knew from her assignment that Ms. Wilson was conducting covert operations for the Agency.

According to government sources, Special Counsel Fitzgerald has been very active since the Libby indictment, deposing a significant number of new witnesses, including *Wash-*

ington Post Deputy Managing Editor Bob Woodward, and pursuing leads that emerged late in the probe.

Cheney is also sweating about the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's Phase II probe into Bush Administration policymakers' abuse of the pre-Iraq war intelligence.

Lyndon LaRouche emphasized in his webcast that the issue for the SSCI is not the interpretation of the intelligence community's work product by policymakers. The issue is what *New Yorker* magazine investigative writer Seymour Hersh dubbed the "stove-pipe"—the flow of fake intelligence from Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress and other neo-conservative-linked outfits, through the Office of Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, directly into the Vice President's hands. The issue is, in fact, the outright lies that were told by Cheney, to get the Congress to capitulate to his obsession with war on Iraq, an obsession he harbored for a decade.

On Nov. 15, Cheney held a private 45-minute session with Ahmed Chalabi, who was visiting Washington on behalf of the Iraqi government. Sources familiar with the Chalabi visit said that the Cheney meeting, and other private meetings the former Iraqi National Committee head had, were to "get their stories straight"—that is, coordinate the coverup of the lies that led the U.S. to war.

In another blow to Cheney and company, it was recently revealed that the Pentagon's Inspector General informed the U.S. Senate on Oct. 19, that a full probe into Doug Feith would be launched, to determine whether his office bypassed the CIA and provided uncorroborated intelligence to the White House to bolster the case for war. The Inspector General's probe came as the result of separate requests from SSCI Chairman Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and Senate Armed Services Committee ranking Democrat Carl Levin (Mich.). Roberts asked for a review of the Office of Special Plans, the Iraq war-planning and propaganda unit that was a hotbed of neo-con agitation. Among the Office of Special Plans staff was Lawrence Franklin, the Iran desk officer who has pled guilty to passing national security secrets to officials of AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and the Israeli embassy in Washington. Levin demanded a broader probe into the overall operations of Feith's policy office in the run-up to the Iraq war, and submitted ten questions for the Inspector General to investigate.

Vote of No-Confidence

Senator Reid's forceful reply to Cheney's Nov. 16 geek act came in the context of a growing chorus of demands for Cheney's departure, and for a radical change in Bush Administration policy—starting in Iraq.

On Nov. 15, the Senate voted up an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill, defining 2006 as the year for Iraq to restore full sovereignty, pledging that the U.S. military will not remain in Iraq "indefinitely," and mandating that President Bush report to Congress every 90 days on the progress in Iraq. The language of the amendment was hammered out by Senators Reid, Levin, Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), and John Warner (R-Va.). The agreement was also endorsed by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.).

After the vote, Reid hailed the bipartisan action as a "great day." "Republicans in the Senate have acknowledged that the situation in Iraq should not be 'stay the course.' " And in a separate press conference, Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Warner reiterated his strong backing for another amendment, banning the U.S. from conducting torture on prisoners. That amendment, sponsored by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), is another direct hit on Vice President Cheney, who, along with his newly minted chief of staff David Addington, has been the Administration's outspoken advocate of torture.

The same day the Senate was passing the bipartisan Iraq amendment, Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), in a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, assailed the Administration for attempting to stifle criticism of the disastrous Iraq war. In a speech that also called for the convening of a regional conference on Iraq's security, involving *all* of Iraq's neighbors, including Iran and Syria, Hagel demanded: "The Bush Administration must understand that each American has a right to question our policies in Iraq and should not be demonized for disagreeing with them. Suggesting that to challenge or criticize policy is undermining and hurting our troops is not democracy nor what this country has stood for, for over 200 years. . . . To question your government is not unpatriotic—to not question your government is unpatriotic. America owes its men and women in uniform a policy worthy of their sacrifices."

Call for Withdrawal

When Cheney lackeys in the House Republican leadership moved to block the convening of a Congressional conference to resolve the Defense Authorization Bill, with the aim of stalling a vote on the anti-torture and Iraq accountability amendments, Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.) was furious. Murtha convened a news conference Nov. 17 to announce that he was calling on the Bush Administration to withdraw all American troops from Iraq. Murtha described the Bush Administration's Iraq policy as "a flawed policy wrapped in illusion." "Our military is suffering. The future of our country is at risk. We cannot continue on the present course,"

The bipartisan revolt against Cheney's Iraq war is the latest step in the movement building for Cheney's ouster. Washington sources have told *EIR* that a ferocious fight is now under way inside the White House, over the issue of Cheney's future. The fight is increasingly taking the form of leaks from unnamed "senior White House officials," expressing their anger at Cheney. For example, the Nov. 13 *Washington Post* published an analysis of Lewis Libby's "attempt to

obscure Cheney's role, and possibly his legal culpability" in the Valerie Plame Wilson leak. "Even some White House aides privately wonder whether Libby was seeking to protect Cheney from political embarrassment," the story concluded.

Time magazine reported that Cheney is becoming "less essential," and BBC aired a report that "there is a feeling on the part of the President, according to people very close to him, that the President got unwise political advice and rosy predictions of how a war and post-war in Iraq would play out." The BBC report noted that Bush and his top advisors think "that the Cheney national security operation got a little too ambitious and got too independent."

Summarizing the picture, the London *Guardian* reported on Nov. 14 that "The President's allegiance to Dick Cheney consigns him to irrelevance and his country to chaos." Bush's decision to reappoint Cheney as his 2004 running mate "day by day, brings him down. . . . Cheney is . . . too old, too sick and in too much trouble. The prosecutors who pursue his chief of staff pursue him too. . . . Every time [Cheney] climbs into some bully pulpit and snarls defiance, Bush's ratings slide again. . . . Goodbye dear Dick, your time is up. Resignation offered and accepted."

Documentation

Murtha: It's Time To Get Troops Out of Iraq

Below are excerpts from a press conference by Rep. John Murtha (D-Penn.) on Nov. 17, 2005.

The war in Iraq is not going as advertised. It is a flawed policy wrapped in illusion. The American public is way ahead of us. The United States and coalition troops have done all they can in Iraq, but it is time for a change in direction.

Rep. John Murtha (D-Penn.)

Our military is suffering. The future of our country is at risk. We cannot continue on the present course. It is evident that continued military action is not in the best interests of the United States of America, the Iraqi people, or the Persian Gulf Region.

General Casey said in a September 2005 hearing: "The perception of occupation in Iraq is a major driving force be-hind the insurgency." General Abizaid said on the same date: "Reducing the size and visibility of the coalition forces in Iraq is part of our counterinsurgency strategy."

For 2 and a half years, I have been concerned about the U.S. policy, and the plan in Iraq. I have addressed my concerns with the Administration and the Pentagon, and have spoken out in public about my concerns.

The main reason for going to war has been discredited. A few days before the start of the war I was in Kuwait. The military drew a red line around Baghdad and said: "When U.S. forces cross that line they will be attacked by the Iraqis with Weapons of Mass Destruction." And I believed it and they believed it. But the U.S. forces said they were prepared. They had well-trained forces with the appropriate protective gear.

We spend more money on intelligence than all the countries in the world together, and more on intelligence than most countries' GDP. But the intelligence concerning Iraq was wrong. It is not a world intelligence failure. It is a U.S. intelligence failure, and the way that intelligence was misused.

I have been visiting our wounded troops at Bethesda and Walter Reed hospitals almost every week since the beginning of the War. And what demoralizes them is not the criticism. What demoralizes them is going to war with not enough troops and equipment to make the transition to peace; the devastation caused by IEDs; being deployed to Iraq when their homes have been ravaged by hurricanes; being on their second or third deployment and leaving their families behind without a network of support. . . .

Our military has been fighting this war in Iraq for over two and a half years. Our military has accomplished its mission and done its duty. Our military captured Saddam Hussein, captured or killed his closest associates, but the war continues to intensify.

Deaths and injuries are growing, and over 2,079 of confirmed American deaths, over 15,500 have been seriously injured—half of them returned to duty—and it's estimated over 50,000 will suffer from what I call battle fatigue. And there have been reports at least 30,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed.

I just recently visited Anbar province in Iraq in order to assess the conditions on the ground. And last May, we put in the emergency supplemental spending bill, the Moran amendment, which was accepted in conference, which required the Secretary of Defense to submit a quarterly report, and accurately measure the stability and security in Iraq.

We've now received two reports. So I've just come from Iraq and I've looked at the next report. I'm disturbed by the findings in the key indicator areas.

Oil production and energy production are below pre-war level. You remember they said that was going to pay for the war, and it's below pre-war level.

Our reconstruction efforts have been crippled by the secu-

rity situation. Only $9 billion of $18 billion appropriated for reconstruction has been spent.

And I said on the floor of the House, when they passed the $87 billion, the $18 billion was the most important part of it because you've got to get people back to work; you've got to get electricity; you've got to get water.

Unemployment is 60%. Now, they tell you in the United States it's less than that. So it may be 40%. But in Iraq, they told me it's 60%, when I was there.

Clean water is scarce and they only spent $500 million of the $2.2 billion appropriated for water projects.

And, most importantly—this is the most important point—incidents have increased from 150 a week to over 700, in the last year. Instead of attacks going down over a time when we had additional more troops, attacks have grown dramatically. Since the revelations at Abu Ghraib, American casualties have doubled.

You look at the timeline. You'll see one per day average before Abu Ghraib. After Abu Ghraib, you'll see two a day—two killed per day because of the dramatic impact that Abu Ghraib had on what we were doing.

And the State Department reported in 2004, right before they quit putting reports out, that indicated a sharp increase in global terrorism.

I said over a year ago now, the military and the Administration agrees now that Iraq cannot be won militarily. I said two years ago, "The key to progress in Iraq is 'Iraqitize,' internationalize, and energize."

Now, we have a packet for you where I sent a letter to the President in September and I got an answer back from the Assistant Secretary of Defense five months later.

I believe the same today. They don't want input. They only want to criticize.

Bush One was the opposite.

Bush One might not like the criticism and constructive suggestion, but he listened to what we had to say.

I believe and I have concluded the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq is impeding this progress. Our troops have become the primary target of the insurgency. They are united against U.S. forces, and we have become a catalyst for violence. U.S. troops are the common enemy of the Sunnis, the Saddamists, and the foreign jihadists. And let me tell you, they haven't captured any in this latest activity, so this idea that they're coming in from outside, we still think there's only 7%.

I believe with a U.S. troop redeployment, the Iraqi security forces will be incentivized to take control. A poll recently conducted—this is a British poll reported in the *Washington Times*—over 80% of Iraqis are strongly opposed to the presence of coalition forces and about 45% of Iraqi population believe attacks against American troops are justified.

I believe we need to turn Iraq over to the Iraqis. I believe before the Iraqi elections, scheduled for mid-December, the Iraqi people and the emerging government must be put on notice: The United States will immediately redeploy—immediately redeploy.

No schedule which can be changed, nothing that's controlled by the Iraqis, this is an immediate redeployment of our American forces because they have become the target.

All of Iraq must know that Iraq is free, free from a United States occupation. And I believe this will send a signal to the Sunnis to join the political process.

My experience in a guerrilla war says that until you find out where they are, until the public is willing to tell you where the insurgent is, you're not going to win this war.

In Vietnam it was the same way. If you have a military operation, and you tell the Sunnis, because their families are in jeopardy—you tell the Iraqis, then they are going to tell the insurgents, because they're worried about their families.

My plan calls for immediate redeployment of U.S. troops consistent with the safety of U.S. forces to create a quick reaction force in the region, to create an over-the-horizon presence of Marines, and to diplomatically pursue security and stability in Iraq.

Question: Congressman, Republicans say that Democrats who are calling for withdrawal are advocating a cut-and-run strategy. What do you say to that criticism?

Murtha: It's time to bring them home. They've done everything they can do. The military has done everything they can do. This war has been so mishandled from the very start. Not only was the intelligence bad, the way they disbanded the troops. There's all kinds of mistakes have been made.

They don't deserve to continue to suffer. They're the targets. They have become the enemy. Eighty percent of the Iraqis want us out of there. The public wants us out of there. . . .

Q: Mr. Murtha, you say that—your first point about bringing them home, consistent with the safety of U.S. forces. You know about these matters. What is your sense as to how long that would be?

Murtha: I think that you get them out of there in six months. I think that we could do it—you have to do it in a very consistent way, but I think six months would be a reasonable time to get them out of there. . . .

Q: The President and the Vice President are both saying that it is now irresponsible for Democrats to criticize the war, and to criticize the intelligence going into the war, because everybody was looking at the same intelligence.

Murtha: I like guys who've never been there that criticize us who've been there. I like that.

I like guys who got five deferments and never been there, and send people to war, and then don't like to hear suggestions about what needs to be done. . . .