

Cheney Is On the Way Out!

by Jeffrey Steinberg

In a momentous development, the Democratic leadership in the United States Senate, on Nov. 8, directly targeted Vice President Dick Cheney, with what amounted to a bill of impeachment.

Following the weekly meeting of the Senate Democratic caucus on Nov. 8, Minority Leader Harry Reid (Nev.), flanked by Senators Charles Schumer (N.Y.) and Richard Durbin (Ill.), announced the release of an Open Letter to President George Bush, demanding that Bush pledge, now, that he will not issue a Presidential pardon to anyone found guilty of a crime in the Fitzgerald investigation.

The letter read, in part: "It is crucial that you make clear in advance that, if convicted, Mr. Libby will not be able to rely on his close relationship with you or Vice President Cheney to obtain the kind of extraordinarily special treatment unavailable to ordinary Americans. In addition, you should do nothing to undermine Mr. Fitzgerald's investigation or diminish accountability in your White House. A pardon in these circumstances would signal that this White House considers itself above the law."

In a psychologically damning aside, Senator Reid told reporters, "We're asking President Bush to avoid following in the footsteps of his father, who pardoned six men—some were convicted, some were indicted in the Iran-Contra scandal."

While the only person so far indicted is Cheney's ex-chief of staff Lewis Libby, Reid began the press conference dramatically, by focussing directly on Cheney: "There is a dark cloud hanging over the White House," he said. "The Vice President . . . sadly is in the middle of that storm."

"The manipulation of intelligence to sell the war in Iraq, Vice President Cheney's involved in that.

"The White House energy policy that puts big oil ahead of the American consumer, Vice President Cheney is behind that.

"Leaking classified information to discredit White House

critics, the Vice President is behind that.

"Halliburton, contracting abuse—the list goes on and it goes on. Certainly, America can do better than that."

Briefed on the Reid press conference, Lyndon LaRouche declared, "This will blow the world wide open. This is tantamount to a bill of impeachment against Cheney. Now, no one can doubt that the Vice President is targeted. The whiff of impeachment is in the air, as of today."

Closed Session

Senate Democrats have been laser-focussed on Cheney since the Oct. 28 indictment of Libby on five counts of obstruction of justice and perjury. The indictment of Libby made clear that it was Vice President Cheney, personally, who gave Libby the identity of Valerie Plame Wilson, the CIA officer and wife of Ambassador Joseph Wilson, and that both men knew that she was involved in covert work for the Agency, by her assignment to the Counterproliferation Division in the Directorate of Operations.

When the White House attempted to divert attention from Cheney with the Oct. 31 8:00 a.m. Bush press conference, announcing the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court, LaRouche immediately warned Senate Democrats not to be suckered by the typical Karl Rove ploy.

The very next day, Nov. 1, Senator Reid pulled off a masterful parliamentary stroke, by convening the Senate in a closed session, to demand that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) go forward with its "phase two" investigation into how Administration policymakers subverted the intelligence process to get their Iraq war.

The action by Reid not only put the focus back on Cheney. It forced the hand of Cheney, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), and SSCI Chairman Pat Roberts (R-Kan.). During a heated closed-door Senate session, the Republicans, caught off guard and plagued by a simmering GOP revolt against Cheney, agreed to appoint a group of three Republican

and three Democratic members of the Senate intelligence panel, to review the status of “phase two” and set ground rules for thorough completion of the probe.

“Phase two” referred to the Senate intelligence panel’s agreement, in February 2004, to produce a detailed review of the role of the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Doug Feith, the office of the Vice President, the Iraqi National Congress, and other neo-conservative hubs, in the manipulation of intelligence to win support for the Iraq War.

On Nov. 7, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) issued a press release spelling out his criteria for a serious “phase two” probe, warning, “First and foremost, we cannot allow the delay in proceeding with Phase II to compromise the quality of the investigation and the report. We must apply the same standards of professionalism that were used to produce the first report, which dealt exclusively with the quality and objectivity of prewar intelligence assessments.”

He elaborated: “The committee must be prepared to interview witnesses, including but not limited to individuals in the White House, the Office of the Vice President, as well as other senior policymakers. We must also have the ability to interview individuals in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy. If the committee is denied testimony or documentation, we must be prepared to issue subpoenas.”

After two contentious days of SSCI closed-door negotiations Nov. 8-9, it appeared that Democrats had won important concessions from Chairman Roberts.

Cheney was dealt another bipartisan Senate blow, when Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and ranking Democrat Patrick Leahy (Vt.) reached an agreement that the Alito confirmation hearings would not begin until Jan. 9, 2006. This, despite heavy White House pressure to put the confirmation on a fast track, to divert Senate attention to what promises to be a contentious ideological and partisan fight.

Cheney’s Tortured Life

The issue that has moved to the center stage of the Cheney-gate battle, however, is the Vice President’s longstanding support for the right of the United States to violate the Geneva Convention, the UN Convention Against Torture, and other U.S. and international laws, pertaining to the rights of prisoners.

Cheney, the Bush Administration’s leading advocate of the right of American interrogators to use torture of prisoners in the “war on terrorism,” has claimed that he only supports this flagrant violation of international law because of the “new situation” following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. But *EIR* last week published an exclusive exposé, showing that Cheney covered up Cold War torture programs, and one “national security murder,” during his tenure as Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Staff at the Gerald Ford White House in the mid-1970s (see *EIR*, Nov. 11 or www.larouchepub.com for the full text of the exposé).

According to Capitol Hill sources, the *EIR* story hit Congress like a ton of bricks, escalating the resistance, particularly among Republicans in the Senate, to Cheney’s obsessive one-man campaign to exempt the CIA from restrictions on torture.

Cheney crossed the line with a number of Republican Senators on Nov. 1, when he used the closed-door weekly meeting of the Senate Republican Caucus to launch into a tirade against Sen. John McCain (Ariz.), for his defense appropriations bill amendment, banning torture interrogations. Cheney had been lobbying for weeks for the CIA to be exempted from the ban, and he staged an angry attack on McCain at the caucus session.

This added to an already growing rift between Cheney and a large number of Senate Republicans. Already, 46 GOP Senators had voted for the McCain Amendment, delivering a 91-9 veto-proof defeat to the White House on an issue that has taken central stage in the battle to oust Cheney.

Senate GOP sources have told *EIR* that when Cheney appointed his general counsel, David Addington, as his new chief of staff, following the resignation of Scooter Libby, this was viewed as a slap in the face to lawmakers battling to stop the torture. Addington is known as the author of the White House “torture memo” that sanctioned the brutality from the top, following the 9/11 attacks.

What’s more, just days after the *EIR* exposure of Cheney’s longstanding policy of protecting government secret torture, *The New Yorker* magazine came out with its own exposé of the Abu Ghraib prison torture, detailing the murder-by-torture of prisoner Manadel al-Jamadi. The article, by Jane Mayer, provided new details on the killing of al-Jamadi, by CIA interrogators on Nov. 4, 2003—just months after Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had sent Army Gen. Geoffrey Miller to Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, to ramp up the interrogation operations, to gain more operational intelligence, at the point that the Iraqi insurgency had significantly escalated operations against the U.S. occupation forces.

LaRouche characterized Cheney’s fit at the Senate session, which was soon leaked to major news outlets, as a major blunder. LaRouche further described Cheney as a “Satanic personality,” who will now make characteristic mistakes, accelerating his own political downfall. “Cheney can’t help himself,” LaRouche explained. “His political days are numbered, and this is good for the nation and the world.”

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