

A 'Perfect Storm' Is Rising To Oust Dick Cheney

by Michele Steinberg

With the combination of the most somber and serious Congressional hearings since Watergate, and the opening of the trial of Vice President Dick Cheney's former Chief of Staff and National Security Advisor, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, for perjury and obstruction of justice, there is a "window of opportunity" for impeachment of the Vice President—and Cheney is jumping right through it.

On Jan. 24, one day after Cheney was exposed by Special Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald, as *directing* the campaign to discredit a credible, *eyewitness* critic, former Ambassador Joe Wilson, by exposing the identity of his wife, Valerie Plame Wilson, who worked as a covert agent of the CIA, Cheney went on national television to announce that the White House will *ignore* any resolution from Congress that criticizes the escalation of force in Iraq.

In an interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer, when asked about the Senate resolution against the "surge," which had just been passed by the Foreign Relations Committee, Cheney boasted, "That won't stop us . . . we are moving forward . . . the President has made his decision."

In short, Cheney's own foul mouth, in bragging that the White House will ignore the Senate resolution against Bush's surge, just hours after the Senate committee passed the *bipartisan* Biden-Hagel-Levin measure, creates the "perfect storm" that could finally sweep Cheney out of the White House.

The exposure of Cheney's role in the Scooter Libby case, and his outrageous dismissal of the constitutional role of the Congress, affords the Bush family—which enlisted Cheney to craft George W. Bush's Presidential run in 2000—an opportunity now to take action to get him out.

This is not a matter of partisan, or revenge politics, but a matter of the national interest. Around the world, as a second carrier group move towards the Persian Gulf, and White

House threats against Iran are repeated on a daily basis, it is recognized that the only certain path to stopping the planned attack on Iran is the impeachment of Dick Cheney, who today, just as in the case of the Iraq War, is running the "team" and the policy for "regime change" in Iran.

Now Is the Time

Pundits—especially those favorable to Cheney's chickenhawk policies—have said that impeachment is unlikely because the Vice President is a "constitutionally elected official" who can only be removed under charges of criminality, or by voluntarily resigning. But, with the opening statement by Special Counsel Fitzgerald in the Libby trial, on Jan. 23, in which he alleged that Cheney issued a *hand-written* memo to Libby on discrediting Wilson, the situation changed. Not only did Fitzgerald disclose the existence of the memo, but he charged that Libby had "wiped out" that incriminating piece of evidence.

However, reportedly through the combination of computer memory recovery methods, and the testimony of witnesses who also knew about Cheney's memo, Fitzgerald was able to introduce the matter in his opening remarks.

Now, to all those who say "impeachment is off the table," one must ask—what would the trial of Richard Nixon's aides Haldeman, Ehrlichman, et al., have looked like, if a hand-written note from Nixon, directing them to break into the offices of Democratic National Committee in the Watergate Hotel, had been disclosed?

Washington insiders report that the Bush family may be the critical factor in getting rid of Cheney, a scenario which is being mooted in the media.

On Jan. 25, Keith Olbermann, the host of the popular "Countdown" show on MSNBC, did a five-minute spot called, "Should Cheney Go?" He pointed to longtime Bush



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Senators and Vietnam vets James Webb (D-Va.), Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), and John Kerry (D-Mass.), all stepped forward at Senate Foreign Relations committee hearings to condemn the Bush-Cheney “surge” in Iraq, and the threatened war against Iran, recognizing, in Kerry’s words, that, “this is our moment.”

family operative, James Baker III, as the person who tried—and failed—to save G.W. Bush from the Cheney disaster.

Olbermann opened his show saying, “Piece by piece testimony at the Scooter Libby trial is dismantling the already tattered reputation of the nation’s Vice President, portraying him as consumed with retaliating against a serious credible critic of his attempts to sell the war. . . .”

Later in the program, Olbermann said, “Another friend of this show, Craig Crawford, reported today that Jim Baker not only led the Iraq Study Group, he was also leading a kind of a private attempt to wrench the President away from Mr. Cheney’s influence and ideology, and ultimately failed in that, judging from what the President is trying to do in Iraq now, in light of the Baker Commission. . . .”

The phrase being increasingly heard in the halls of Congress and around Washington is, “the time is now.” It is being used in the appeals from Republicans to the Bush family to save the Party and the Bush legacy—by getting Cheney out. And, it has been heard in open Congressional hearings, such as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee vote of Jan. 24 on the Biden-Hagel-Levin resolution that condemned Bush’s “surge” in Iraq. Senators said “now is the time” that Congress must take decisive action, such as capping the number of troops in Iraq, or cutting off the funds for the war, using the “power of the purse.”

Impeach Cheney Now

According to a well-informed Washington intelligence source, the major question after day one of the Libby trial was, “Why was the Vice President not indicted along with Libby?” Fitzgerald apparently did not want to influence the outcome of the 2006 election by issuing an indictment before the vote—but, there is no obstacle now. And, a massive out-

pouring from the voters could actually bring it about.

In three days of trial, evidence has been introduced that it was Cheney who was obsessed with discrediting Wilson, and it was Cheney who personally directed the anti-Wilson campaign, which included the “outing” of Plame (who was, ironically, trying to track down weapons of mass destruction in Iran!).

Even Voice of America, a news service wholly owned by the U.S. government, pointed to Cheney. On Jan. 26, an unusual article, signed only as “By VOA News,” said the following:

“A former spokeswoman to Vice President Dick Cheney says she informed Cheney and his former chief-of-staff, Lewis ‘Scooter’ Libby, about the identity of a CIA operative married to a Bush administration critic.

“[Cathie] Martin testified that she informed Cheney and Libby of Plame’s identity after learning it from a CIA official. She also said Cheney personally directed efforts to discredit Wilson’s allegations.”

Coming on the heels of Fitzgerald’s disclosure of the Cheney memo, written during a trip to Norfolk, Virginia, which included Cathie Martin, Cheney, and Libby, there is growing pressure to prosecute Cheney.

Congress Takes Action

Parallel to the political explosion in the Libby trial, is a drive by members of the U.S. Congress to *stop* Bush’s stubborn madness in the Persian Gulf—both his escalation of troop deployments in Iraq, and his refusal to diplomatically engage Iran and Syria to find a way to end the Iraq conflict.

On Jan. 24, the vote by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in favor of the Concurrent Resolution against the surge, was evidence of what Lyndon LaRouche has dubbed the

“New Politics,” following the Nov. 7, 2006 election.

By a 12-9 vote, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed the Biden-Hagel-Levin resolution, which states, “it is not in the national interest of the United States to deepen its military involvement in Iraq.” Quite revealing was the fact that of the ten Republicans on the committee, only one, Sen. David Vitter (La.), explicitly supported the Bush surge as stated.

But more compelling than the dry words of a consensus resolution, was the three-hour debate, which every member of the 21-person committee attended. In that debate, the central issue was the adoption of the Baker-Hamilton/Iraq Study Group report, as the policy of the nation.

Of great import is a second *bipartisan* Senate concurrent resolution against the surge (see *Documentation*), this issue), introduced by Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, a former Secretary of the Navy, and one of the most senior Republicans in the Congress. The Warner resolution is co-sponsored by Sens. Susan Collins (R-Me.), Ben Nelson (D-Neb.), and Norm Coleman (R-Minn.).

On Jan. 22, in announcing the resolution, Warner said that he would not act on a vote until after the Biden-Hagel-Levin resolution comes to the Senate floor—which is expected during the week of Jan. 29. Foreign Relations Committee chairman Joe Biden (D-Del.) said that, in some respects, the Warner resolution is tougher than theirs, and he would be open to working out a common resolution with Warner. However, it appears, for now, that Warner will keep the two separate.

But these two bills are just the tip of the iceberg. There are already four additional resolutions that have been introduced to block a war on Iran:

- House Concurrent Resolution 43, introduced by Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.), with ten co-sponsors, calls for implementation of the Baker-Hamilton Commission’s recommendation on diplomacy with Iran and Syria;

- Senate Resolution 39, introduced by Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), addresses the need for Congressional approval before the White House can take offensive military action against any other nation;

- House Concurrent Resolution 33, introduced by Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), with 30 co-sponsors, says the President should not take military action against Iran without Congressional authorization;

- House Joint Resolution 13, introduced by Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.), with 18 co-sponsors, attempts to block offensive military action against Iran.

However, there are serious concerns that these actions do not go far enough, and are not fast enough. Many observers believe that only immediate steps to remove the Vice President by impeachment could protect the nation from the disaster of a war with Iran.

With that mood in the country, it is not surprising that, on Jan. 25, Congressional actions escalated:

- The Senate Judiciary committee has scheduled a hearing on Jan. 30, entitled “Congress’s Power To End a War.” Its chairman, Russ Feingold (D-Wisc.), said, “Congress holds the power of the purse, and if the President continues to advance his failed Iraq policy, we have the responsibility to use that power to safely redeploy our troops from Iraq. This hearing will help inform my colleagues and the public about Congress’s power to end a war and how that power has been used in the past.” Among the scheduled witnesses is Prof. Walter Dellinger of Duke University School of Law, a former U.S. Solicitor General, and an expert on impeachment.

- House Judiciary Committee chairman John Conyers (D-Mich.) announced that his committee will hold hearings, beginning Jan. 31, on President Bush’s rampant abuse of “signing statements” and Bush’s claim that these documents give him the power to ignore laws duly passed by the Congress.

Commentators immediately noted that, with these hearings, impeachment is now “back on the table.”

Then, on Jan. 26, Jay Rockefeller (D-W.V.), chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, charged that Dick Cheney had obstructed and delayed the Senate investigation of “Phase II” of the committee’s investigation of the misuse of Iraq War intelligence. Observers say this charge, if proved, reaches the threshold of “high crimes and misdemeanors,” the Constitutional requirement for impeachment.

A Fiery Debate

When Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana, the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, presented a mealy-mouthed opposition to the Biden-Hagel-Levin resolution, saying that it will “deepen the divide” between the Legislature and the Executive on Iraq, his strongest opponent was fellow-Republican Chuck Hagel of Nebraska. Hagel, a Vietnam War hero, pummeled the idea that any Senator can continue to remain silent on Iraq. The nation has passed the point of a divide, Hagel said, and the question is, should Congress ever get involved? He cited Senator Warner’s assertion that, “We’re a co-equal branch . . . [based on] Article I of the Constitution.”

Hagel continued, even more impassioned, demanding that all 100 Senators step up to the plate on this tough decision, challenging them: “You want a safe job? Go sell shoes.”

He charged that the impugning of the motives of the resolution sponsors, and questioning their patriotism is “offensive and disgusting,” and that the American people are far ahead of the Congress in recognizing that the administration has failed in Iraq. He warned Congress not to send any more American soldiers into “that grinder.”

Hagel said he wants “every Senator to look into the camera” and tell the people back home what they think. “Don’t hide any more!” The President’s plan would make the world far more dangerous, and more dangerous for America, Hagel charged. “Read the Baker-Hamilton report,” he added, a com-

ment which became standard for almost every supporter of the resolution—and even some of the opponents.

From Vietnam veterans John Kerry (D-Mass.), James Webb (D-Va.), and Hagel, to Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), who silenced the opposition when she revealed that her state has the highest number of deaths of American soldiers in Iraq, the debate was a proud hour for American citizens.

Senator Feingold wants the Congress to cut funding after a certain point, and Kerry captured the sentiments of all in declaring, “This is our moment, and our time.”