

Cheney's Crimes: Case for Impeachment Builds Momentum

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Dick Cheney's days as Vice President appear to be numbered, even as, on his tour of Western Europe, he tried to "soften his image" as the Bush Administration's leading war hawk, and the architect of the Big Lie campaign that led to the disastrous and needless Iraq invasion. An entire brigade of American soldiers have already been killed or wounded in Iraq, in a war fought over non-existent weapons of mass destruction and fabricated links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. Cheney, beyond all other Administration officials, was the Joseph Goebbels of the Iraq war. As recently as his media interviews in Switzerland and Italy in late January, he continued to lie about Iraq's weapons, claiming that several trailers seized by American inspectors, following the March 2003 invasion, were mobile bio-weapons labs.

David Kay, the CIA's chief weapons inspector in Iraq until his hasty mid-January resignation, made clear in interviews and in testimony at the Senate Armed Services Committee on Jan. 28, that these trailers had nothing to do with WMD. Former CIA chief of counterterrorism Vincent Cannistraro told *Salon* magazine on Jan. 29, "It's disgusting. I just can't find words to describe how horrible it is. . . . It just illustrates the peculiar worldview Cheney has and how distorted it is. And it shows there's a real contempt for the professional intelligence community."

And Cheney is coming under mounting fire for his recent interview with the *Rocky Mountain News* in Colorado, in which he violated a Bush Administration Executive Order on classified material, by confirming that a Pentagon memo, leaked illegally to *The Weekly Standard*, was the "best source" of proof of Saddam Hussein's ties to al-Qaeda before the 9/11 attacks.

Just moments after Air Force Two had landed back in Washington, returning Cheney from his failed European charm offensive, the Vice President made a bee-line for Capitol Hill. He launched a one-man damage-control offensive against the Kay revelations, and growing Congressional demands for an independent commis-



For three years the éminence grise behind the war and economic policies of the most limited of Presidents, Dick Cheney has now come out of the bunker and is seen and heard everywhere, defending himself—because LaRouche and his movement have succeeded in making Cheney the issue, and he could remain behind the scenes no longer.

sion to probe the Cheney-led disinformation campaign which led to the Iraq invasion. According to Capitol Hill sources, Cheney arm-twisted House Select Committee on Intelligence chairman Porter Goss (R-Fla.), and Senate panel chair Pat Roberts (R-Ka.), to ram through plans to close out their investigations of the pre-war intelligence lapses, without any probe of White House manipulation and abuse of the intelligence process. Cheney's instructions: Blame the CIA and close the books on the probe.

What is new in this latest flurry of Cheney displays of beast-man arrogance, is that the Vice President is no longer being given a free ride.

Exit Scenarios

In the reports that follow, you will be presented with some of the most damning evidence against the Vice President—evidence that should lead to his impeachment from office, or his voluntary or involuntary retirement. It was all the way back in September 2002, six months prior to the Iraq invasion, that Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche demanded Cheney's ouster from the Bush Administration. The evidence for Cheney's removal from Office has grown by leaps and bounds since then. And now, as the result of the persistence of LaRouche and his associates, a growing chorus of Democrats, and even some Republicans, are demanding Cheney's departure.

There are a number of scenarios in play, any one of which could lead to Cheney's resignation or, at minimum, his early

removal from President George W. Bush's re-election ticket. LaRouche summed up President Bush and Karl Rove's dilemma in a recent discussion: If George Bush dumps Dick Cheney from the ticket, he loses. If he keeps Cheney on the ticket, he loses.

According to sources close to the Bush campaign, polls show that Vice President Cheney is increasingly becoming a drag on the re-election effort, with many moderate Republicans preparing to jump ship, if the Administration continues to buy into the paranoid wanna-be imperial policies associated with the Vice President and his neo-conservative allies. Leading Republicans, like former Secretary of State James Baker III and even former President George H.W. Bush, had quietly been assuring Establishment colleagues—both Republican and Democrat—that G.W.'s State of the Union address would signal a clear return to the non-abrasive, "coalition-building" politics of "Bush 41." When the President, instead, delivered a no-holds-barred defense of the Cheney doctrine of unilateralism and preventive war, Baker et al. came away with egg on their faces.

The same sources report that the just-published memoir by former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and Ron Suskind, which exposed Cheney's role as the driver of the Iraq war and the agenda of massive tax cuts for the rich, was no mere "kiss and tell" gripe-fest. O'Neill's criticisms reflect the growing disgust, among "Main Street" Republicans, with Cheney in particular, and the Bush Administration in general.

If this was the only consideration, it is likely that Dick

Cheney would have already been removed from the 2004 ticket, and, perhaps, he would have even stepped down as Vice President. But campaign Svengali Karl Rove is also painfully aware that the Republican Party's strange-bedfellow election coalition includes at least a 5-10% factor of crazies—neo-cons, Bible Belt Christian Zionists, and other radical rightists—who would possibly sit home on election day, were Cheney to be off the ticket.

As one Washington insider put it, for a sitting Republican President, running unopposed for his party's nomination, to be running neck-and-neck with an as-yet-unchosen Democratic rival, is unprecedented. Another former Cabinet-level official, familiar with the Veep's hooligan style, warned that a desperate Dick Cheney could resort to desperate measures to keep his job. He made explicit reference to another 9/11.

No Free Ride in November

What makes Rove's position so damning is the dramatic transformation of the Democratic Party, in the immediate aftermath of the Iowa caucuses, President Bush's disastrous Jan. 20 State of the Union address, and the Jan. 27 New Hampshire Democratic primary vote. Suddenly, leading Democratic Party "institutional" players—from Senators Edward Kennedy (Mass.), John D. Rockefeller (W.Va.), Carl Levin (Mich.), Tom Daschle (S.D.), and Representatives Henry Waxman (Calif.), John Conyers (Mich.), and Nancy Pelosi (Calif.), to party operatives like Center for American Progress head John Podesta—have awakened to the reality, long promoted by LaRouche, that Dick Cheney is the Achilles' heel of the Bush re-election effort, and that Bush can and must be defeated in November.

No longer does organized-crime-tainted Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe have the political muscle to wreck the party's chances to wage a genuine campaign to take back the White House. As one well-known Democratic campaign strategist put it, "The DNC is irrelevant."

The avalanche of attacks on Cheney constitute a virtual bill of indictment against the Vice President for a string of crimes touching on the national security of the United States, and on issues of corruption that reach the highest echelons of the Administration. Many of these crimes are the subject of ongoing investigations or of calls for new probes:

- As first reported in *EIR* on Jan. 9, 2004, a French criminal probe is underway, into \$180 million in bribes, purportedly paid to Nigerian government officials by a consortium of companies led by Halliburton—during Cheney's tenure as CEO. French Judge Renaud Van Ruymbeke is heading the probe, and told French and American journalists in mid-January, that he is considering "misuse of corporate assets" charges against Cheney personally.

- On Jan. 25, CBS-TV's "Sixty Minutes" broadcast a story charging that Halliburton engaged in "trading with the enemy" while Cheney headed the company. Through a Cay-

man Islands subsidiary, Halliburton Products and Services, Ltd., the company built up a \$40-million-a-year business in Iran, in what New York City Comptroller William Thompson told CBS was a violation of "the spirit of the law." Thompson charged that Halliburton's offshore dealing "benefits terrorism."

- Cheney is already a prime subject of the Justice Department probe into the leak of the identity of CIA undercover officer Valerie Plame, the wife of former Ambassador Joseph Wilson. On Jan. 26, six leading Congressional Democrats wrote to the Comptroller General, demanding a separate General Accounting Office probe of White House violations of security procedures for preventing national security leaks. The procedures violated by Cheney and others are spelled out in Executive Order 12958, signed by President George W. Bush shortly after he was inaugurated.

In their letter to David Walker, Senators Daschle, Lieberman and Rockefeller, and Representatives Pelosi, Waxman and Conyers concluded: "Protecting our nation's secrets is essential to protecting our nation's security. Safeguarding the identities of covert intelligence officers is especially critical to protecting their lives and the lives of everyone they come in contact with. . . . The disclosure of Valerie Plame's covert CIA identity calls into doubt the adequacy of the procedures that the White House has followed to safeguard these vital national secrets. GAO's thorough and prompt investigation into this matter is necessary so that the deficiencies in the White House procedures can be identified and corrected. This is an essential step in restoring public confidence in how the White House handles national security secrets."

On Jan. 26, even Gen. Wesley Clark, a faltering candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination, lambasted Cheney for endorsing a *Weekly Standard* article on Saddam's links to al-Qaeda that was exclusively drawn from a leaked Pentagon document. It is a violation, under E.O. 12958, even to give after-the-fact corroboration of an illegally leaked classified document. Worse, the document in question, prepared by Pentagon neo-con Under Secretary of Defense Doug Feith, was a patchwork of raw intelligence leads and outright lies and distortions, attempting to make a credible case of Saddam ties to the 9/11 attackers, when no such case exists.

- Cheney has come under escalating attack for his role in the disinformation campaign to win Congressional and public support for the Iraq war. In appearances this week, Sens. Levin, Rockefeller, and Daschle all singled out the Vice President for using fake intelligence to launch a predetermined war—and for continuing to use the same now officially disproven lies, to justify the war. The Senators cited Cheney's repeated references, during his European tour, to the discovery of the mobile trailers—the ones Kay had confirmed were not weapons-related—as "bio-weapons labs."

"I find it incredible, utterly incredible," Sen. Rockefeller told reporters, "that the Vice President of the United States



Striding the stage at Davos: After Vice President Dick Cheney's failed charm offensive to Europe—where he kept repeating the discredited assertion that Saddam Hussein had WMD—he went straight to Capitol Hill, hoping to contain Congressional demands to probe the Cheney-led disinformation campaign which had paved the way for the Iraq invasion.

could, a few days ago, say that two semi-trailers, which were found, were 'conclusive evidence' that Saddam had programs for weapons of mass destruction when his own intelligence community, according to David Kay, has reached a consensus that they had nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction. There are many other examples of exaggerations that continue to this day, by the Vice President of the United States and others in this Administration, and it is intolerable. It is incredible."

Senator Rockefeller zeroed in on another Cheney crime—the use of unvetted intelligence to make the case for war. Through former Cheney staffer William Luti, the normally nondescript Near East and South Asia (NESA) policy shop at the Pentagon was turned into "Neo-con Central," housing the Office of Special Plans (OSP), a clearinghouse for disinformation and illegal covert operations, which reported directly to Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby.

Rockefeller told reporters, "It's now a question, which we are looking at, whether or not there were other sources of intelligence which uniquely went around the intelligence community as a whole, went directly through a particular department of the Defense Department and then directly—often unvetted, often single-sourced, often raw material—directly to the vice president, to policymakers, from which they began to make decisions.

"If that were to be the case," he continued, "it brings into sharp definition the whole question of pre-emption as a national policy . . . Which leads to a further point, that was this a predetermined war or not? And I think that remains an overwhelming question."

Senators Levin, Rockefeller, and Daschle all endorsed a call by a group of ten former CIA officers for an independent bipartisan House probe of the intelligence fakery (See *EIR*, Jan. 30, 2004). The Senators also mooted they may be forced to press for an independent commission, to get to the bottom of White House manipulation of pre-war intelligence. Following David Kay's Jan. 28 testimony at the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) announced he'd be introducing legislation to create an independent commission to probe the pre-war intelligence, bolstering an earlier call by Sen. John Corzine (D-N.J.).

More Public Roasting of Cheney

The *New York Times* on Jan. 27 weighed in with yet another direct hit at the Vice President, in a lead editorial headlined, "Mr. Cheney, Meet Mr.

Kay." The editorial, citing recent Cheney statements about Iraq's WMD schemes, declared, "The Vice President's myopia suggests a breathtaking unwillingness to accept a reality that conflicts with the Administration's preconceived notions. This kind of rigid thinking helped propel us into an invasion without broad international support, and, if Mr. Cheney is as influential as many say, could propel us into further misadventures down the road."

Jan. 29, *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd summarized the case against Dick Cheney as spinmeister-in-chief of the Bush Administration's war party: "Dick Cheney, who declared that Saddam had a nuclear capability and who visited CIA headquarters in the Summer of 2002 to make sure the raw intelligence was properly interpreted, is sticking to his deluded guns. . . . The vice president pushed to slough off the allies and the UN and go to war partly because he thought that slapping a weakened bully like Saddam would scare other dictators. He must have reckoned there would be no day of reckoning on weapons once Saddam was gone. So it had to be some new definition of *chutzpah* on Tuesday, when Mr. Cheney, exuding more infallibility than the Pope, presented him with a crystal dove."

While dumping Cheney from the ticket might not salvage George Bush's re-election, it would, as LaRouche has argued for the past 18 months, partly salvage his Presidential legacy, and offer an opportunity to avert future disasters, which neither the United States nor the rest of the world can afford. The President's men would do well to study the documentation of Dick Cheney's crimes that follows, before making their fateful decision.