
Chronology

Cheney's Crimes: The Wilson-Plame Affair

2001

October-December: U.S., British, French, and Israeli intelligence services receive reports from the Italian intelligence agency SISMI that Niger government documents show that agents of the Saddam Hussein regime sought to purchase tons of yellowcake uranium from the African state.

2002

February: In response to a query from Vice President Dick Cheney about the alleged Niger-Iraq yellowcake deal, the CIA dispatches former Ambassador Joseph Wilson IV to Niger. In the same approximate time frame, the Pentagon dispatches an active-duty Marine general to Niger to probe the same allegations. Both Wilson and the Marine general conclude that the story is untrue.

August: White House Iraq Group (WHIG) is formed, and operates out of the Vice President's office, to publicize the alleged threat posed by Saddam Hussein. Judith Miller of the *New York Times* is one of its primary outlets. The WHIG included Condoleezza Rice, Stephen Hadley, Karl Rove, Karen Hughes, Lewis Libby, and others from Cheney's office. Cheney attends some meetings, and discusses, in late Spring 2003, background interviews that Wilson had given to Nicholas Kristoff of the *New York Times* before Wilson went public.

2003

Jan. 28: President Bush delivers State of the Union Address, which includes the infamous 16 words: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

March 7: International Atomic Energy Agency head Dr. Mohammed ElBaradei testifies before the United Nations Security Council that IAEA inspectors in Iraq have found no evidence of a nuclear weapons program. ElBaradei also reveals publicly, for the first time, that the Niger documents

alleging the Iraqi attempts to purchase yellowcake, are shoddy forgeries.

March 8: Amb. Joseph Wilson appears on CNN television and says that Bush Administration officials had evidence in their possession, prior to the ElBaradei testimony, showing that the Niger documents were false.

March 9: A meeting takes place in the Office of Vice President Cheney, involving Libby, Rove, Hadley, and John Hannah, to discuss the Wilson TV appearance. A background probe is ordered, and subsequently, information against Wilson is shared with neo-conservative members of the Defense Policy Board, according to several U.S. intelligence sources.

"The way I remember it," a former CIA official who was at the meeting says, "is that the Vice President was obsessed with Wilson. He called him an 'asshole,' a son-of-a-bitch. He took his [Wilson's] comments very personally. He wanted us to do everything in our power to destroy his reputation, and he wanted to be kept up to date about the progress."

March 19: Iraq War begins.

May 6: Nicholas Kristoff's column is published in the *New York Times*, entitled "Missing in Action: Truth," which reveals the existence of the CIA fact-finding mission to Niger in February 2002, without citing Wilson's name. After this column appears, Cheney visits CIA headquarters to inquire about Wilson. "Cheney and Libby made it clear that Wilson had to be shut down," says a former CIA official.

May 29: Lewis Libby asks a State Department official, reportedly Undersecretary of State Marc Grossman, for information concerning Wilson's trip to Africa.

June 9: Classified documents concerning Wilson's trip (but not mentioning Wilson by name), are faxed to the Office of the Vice President to the personal attention of Libby.

June 10: A State Department memo, prepared under the supervision of the Intelligence and Research (INR) Division, identifies Valerie Plame as the wife of Ambassador Wilson,



Member of the White House Iraq Group Stephen Hadley. The WHIG was formed in August 2002 to publicize the alleged threat posed by Saddam Hussein.

NATO

and a counterproliferation expert with the CIA. High-level intelligence community sources tell *EIR* that the insertion of Plame's name and identity was done at the arms control office of the State Department, then headed by John Bolton. Bolton's personal deputy at the time is Frederick Fleitz, a CIA officer on loan to the Department, who had worked with Plame. The INR memo will circulate among top State Department officials, and will be transmitted to Secretary of State Colin Powell in July, while he is traveling in Africa with President Bush.

June 11-12: Libby is told by a State Department official, probably Grossman, that Wilson's wife worked at the CIA. Libby then asked a senior CIA official about Wilson's trip, and was told that Wilson's wife worked at the CIA.

June 12: Libby is told by Cheney that Wilson's wife worked at the CIA in the Counterproliferation Division. High-level intelligence community sources report to *EIR* that Cheney's source on Valerie Plame is likely CIA Director George Tenet.

June 23: Libby meets with *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller; Libby criticizes the CIA, and tells Miller that Wilson's wife might work at the CIA.

July 2: In Lyndon LaRouche's Washington, D.C. international webcast, "A Real President for the U.S.A.," he declares: Get rid of Cheney for the good of the nation.

July 6: Sunday *New York Times* publishes Joe Wilson op-ed criticizing Bush's remarks on Iraq yellowcake purchase in Niger, for relying on forged documents. Wilson states that the CIA provided this intelligence to the White House prior to Bush's State of the Union Address in January 2003. Wilson is also interviewed by the *Washington Post*, and appears on NBC's "Meet the Press."

July 7: Libby tells White House Press Secretary Ari

Fleischer that it was Wilson's wife, not Cheney, who sent Wilson to Africa, and that she works in "the Counterproliferation area of the CIA."

July 8: Libby meets with Judith Miller, tells her that Wilson's wife works for the CIA, and discloses classified information from the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq. Libby also meets with Cheney's legal counsel David Addington and asks him what paperwork there would be at CIA if an employee's spouse undertook an overseas trip.

July 10-11: Libby speaks with White House official "A," who tells him of a conversation he had with journalist Robert Novak, and tells Libby that Novak will be writing a column about Wilson's wife as a CIA employee. Libby also speaks with NBC's Tim Russert.

July 12: Libby speaks by telephone with *Time* magazine's Matt Cooper, and confirms to Cooper that he had heard that Wilson's wife was involved in sending Wilson on the Africa trip.

July 14: Syndicated columnist Robert Novak "outs" Valerie Plame as a CIA operative, writing: "Wilson never worked for the CIA, but his wife, Valerie Plame, is an Agency operative on weapons of mass destruction. Two senior Administration officials told me Wilson's wife suggested sending him to Niger to investigate the Italian report."

July 21: Wilson receives a telephone call, about a week after his wife's "outing," from TV talk-show host Chris Matthews of "Hardball," who tells him that Karl Rove, President Bush's top political advisor, has just told him, "Wilson's wife is fair game."

July 22: *Newsday* is even more specific, saying that Plame "works at the agency [CIA] on weapons of mass destruction issues in an undercover capacity."

July 22: White House spokesman Scott McClellan says there is no truth to the suggestion that someone in the White House leaked the Plame information.

July 24: Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) calls on the FBI to investigate whether a crime has been committed in the Plame leak.

Late July: The CIA files a "crime report" with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) suggesting that the leak of Wilson's wife's name and covert status might entail criminal acts.

Sept. 14: Cheney appears on NBC's "Meet the Press," and states: "I don't know Joe Wilson. . . . I don't know who sent Joe Wilson. . . . I don't know Joe Wilson. I have no idea who hired him."

Sept. 23: The CIA files papers with DOJ as part of preliminary investigation.

Sept. 26: John Dion, director of the DOJ's Counterespionage section, authorizes the FBI to commence a criminal investigation regarding the unauthorized disclosure of classified information concerning Plame's affiliation with the CIA.

Sept. 28: A source in the Administration confirms to the *Washington Post* that two senior Administration officials contacted at least six reporters about the identity and occupation



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Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, as White House General Counsel in September 2003, withheld several e-mails that reportedly incriminate Cheney and others from the Department of Justice investigation, citing "executive privilege" and "national security."

of Wilson's wife. The source claims, "Clearly, it was meant purely and simply for revenge." He states that he is sharing the information because the disclosure was "wrong and a huge miscalculation, because they were irrelevant and did nothing to diminish Wilson's credibility."

Sept. 29: The *Washington Post* reports that, although President Bush says he will cooperate with the Plame leak probe, "Bush has no plans to ask his staff members whether they played a role."

Sept. 29: At a White House press briefing, Cheney's name is raised three times, forcing White House spokesman Scott McClellan to issue a categorical denial of Cheney's involvement. "There's been nothing, absolutely nothing brought to our attention to suggest any White House involvement, and that includes the Vice President's Office as well," McClellan says.

Sept. 29-30: DOJ notifies the White House of its decision to move ahead with a full investigation on the evening of Sept. 29. Bush is informed on the morning of Sept. 30, by then White House General Counsel Alberto Gonzales.

Sept. 30: Eleven hours pass between the time that the White House is notified of the investigation and the time that Administration officials ask staff to preserve records. Gonzales then spends two more weeks screening e-mails, and withholds a number of e-mails that reportedly incriminate Cheney and his aides and other White House officials; Gonzales cites "Executive privilege" and "national security" as grounds for withholding the documents.

Oct. 1: Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) says that Bush needs to be proactive: "He has that main responsibility to see this through and see it through quickly, and that would include, if I was President, sitting down with my Vice President and asking what he knows about it."

Oct. 2: Attorney General Ashcroft is under pressure to recuse himself from the investigation because of his ties to Karl Rove. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) says "recusal is something Ashcroft ought to consider."

Oct. 7: Before an internal investigation is conducted, the White House rules out Karl Rove, Vice Presidential chief of staff Lewis Libby, and National Security Council senior director Elliott Abrams as possible sources for the news leak.

Oct. 8: Bush tells reporters that the leaker is not likely to be found, because reporters won't reveal the source. Besides, "this is a large Administration, and there's a lot of senior officials," the U.S. President said.

Oct. 9: Senate Minority Leader Thomas Daschle (D-S.D.) and Democratic Senators Joseph Biden (Del.), Carl Levin (Mich.), and Charles Schumer (N.Y.), send a letter to President Bush pointing to "five missteps" in the investigation of the blown cover of CIA agent Valerie Plame Wilson:

1. Decision of then-White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales to screen documents of White House employees submitted in response to the DOJ request, and his possible claim of "Executive privilege" to withhold some;
2. The DOJ begins its investigation on Sept. 26, but does not ask the White House to order employees to preserve relevant evidence until Sept. 29;
3. The DOJ does not ask the Pentagon and State Department to preserve possible evidence until late on Oct. 1, after news reports that such a request was coming;
4. White House Press Secretary McClellan says said that he determined that three senior officials who were the subject of speculation in news accounts were not involved in leaking classified information; the Senators believe that this displayed rank incompetence; and,
5. Attorney General Ashcroft remains responsible for the probe, despite his close political and personal relationships with Bush and his top aides.

Oct. 14 and Nov. 26: Libby is interviewed twice by FBI special agents, and lies about his discussions with NBC's Tim Russert and *Time*'s Matt Cooper, and the *New York Times*'s Judith Miller. He states that he first learned about Plame's identity from Russert, whereas in truth, he had previously learned of it from Cheney.

Dec. 22: Senators Levin and Daschle demand the appointment of a special prosecutor.

Dec. 30: Attorney General Ashcroft recuses himself from the leak investigation. James Comey, Deputy Attorney General, appoints Patrick Fitzgerald, the U.S. Attorney in Chicago, as "special counsel" to take over the investigation.

2004

January: Fitzgerald subpoenas notes, e-mails, and attendance records for the WHIG.

Early 2004: Cheney is interviewed by Fitzgerald, and reportedly denies that either he or his staff was involved in disclosing Plame's identity, or that anyone in his office tried to discredit Joe Wilson.

March 5 and 24: Libby testifies falsely before the grand jury about his discussions with NBC's Tim Russert, *Time*'s Matt Cooper, and the *New York Times*'s Judith Miller, and he lies that he had learned of Plame's identity from reporters, whereas he had learned it from Cheney.

April 1: Fitzgerald is reported to have expanded his probe into the issue of White House officials lying to investigators, and mishandling classified information.

May 21: Fitzgerald is reported to have issued subpoenas to journalists who discussed the matter with the White House between July 6 and 13, including *Time*'s Matt Cooper.

June 6: The *Washington Post* reports that representatives of special prosecutor Fitzgerald have interviewed Dick Cheney.

June 16: White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales testifies before the grand jury.

June 24: President Bush is questioned by Fitzgerald. The interview lasts more than an hour, and a White House spokesman confirms that the President has retained private counsel.

July 20: Matt Cooper is held in contempt for not responding to Fitzgerald's subpoena.

Aug. 12: Fitzgerald subpoenas *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller on her discussions with the White House.

Aug. 13: Former Ambassador Wilson comments on the pending actions against the reporters, saying that the President could easily solve the problem: "The question is, who could get to the bottom of this very quickly? The President of the United States. There has to be an internal investigation into who's betraying the country—an investigation with sworn affidavits from everybody on his staff—and the President ought to insist everybody who talked to any reporter about this subject sign a waiver."

September-October: Fitzgerald submits sealed affidavits to the court, in seeking to find Miller and Cooper in contempt of court; Fitzgerald tells the court that his investigation has expanded to include the offenses of perjury and obstruction of justice.

Oct. 16: Karl Rove testifies before the grand jury.

2005

Feb. 15: D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals upholds contempt ruling against Cooper and Miller.

July 6: Judith Miller goes to jail, but Matt Cooper agrees to testify, after receiving a call and a waiver from his White House source.

July 18: After testifying to the grand jury on July 13, Cooper writes an account saying that Karl Rove was the first person to tell him that Wilson's wife was a CIA officer.

Aug. 12: Deputy Attorney General Comey designates a 40-year Justice Department career professional, David Margolis, to oversee the Fitzgerald investigation, thus preempting a rumored "Saturday Night Massacre" in which Cheney would have put a Bush crony in charge of the investigation, who would then fire Fitzgerald and shut the investigation down.



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Karl Rove was the first person to tell Time reporter Matt Cooper that Wilson's wife was a CIA agent, Cooper said on July 18, 2005. But the White House had ruled out Rove's involvement back in 2003.

Sept. 29-30: Miller agrees to testify to the grand jury. She is released from jail on Sept 29, and appears before the grand jury the next day. She testifies before the grand jury again on Oct. 12.

October: Rove is called back to the grand jury, and testifies for the fourth time.

Oct. 28: Libby is indicted on five counts of making false statements, perjury, and obstruction of justice. Although the grand jury's term is expiring, Fitzgerald announces that his investigation is continuing.

Nov. 14: *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward testifies under oath in a deposition taken by Fitzgerald; his testimony reportedly involves the WHIG group.

Nov. 18: Fitzgerald informs the court that he will be convening a new grand jury.

Dec. 7: Fitzgerald presents evidence to a new grand jury.

Late December: Fitzgerald is reported to be investigating the Niger document forgeries, according to *EIR*'s sources and others.

2006

January-February: Fitzgerald continues to meet with the new grand jury, usually twice a week.

Jan. 23: In a letter to Libby's attorneys, Fitzgerald states that "not all e-mail of the Office of Vice President and the Executive Office of the President was preserved through the normal archiving process on the White House computer system."

Mid-February: Sources tell *EIR* that Cheney continues to be a major focus of Fitzgerald's investigation, and is likely to be called again to testify, prior to Libby's trial, which is now scheduled for January 2007. Among the issues: Cheney's own perjured statements in interview with Fitzgerald, which matched precisely testimony by Libby that was the basis for his obstruction and perjury indictment; and the disappearance of e-mails in Cheney's office relating to the Plame matter, and the possibility of tampering with computer hard-drives.