

Senate Misconduct, Israel Disclosure Fuel ‘Cheneygate’

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Edward Spannaus

While the Senate Intelligence Committee investigation of the bogus intelligence used to justify the Iraq War has been put on ice by Vice President Dick Cheney, operating through Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), two new elements have emerged which will increase the pressure for blowing open the Iraq probe—despite Cheney’s determined efforts to shut it down.

First, following the theft of the Democratic staff memo from the secure Senate Intelligence Committee computer system, a parallel “plumbers unit” type of computer break-in and theft took place in the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is now the subject of a full investigation.

This pattern of thefts and leaks, compounded by the “friendly” leak of the classified memo by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Doug Feith, purporting to show links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, requires an investigation of illegal disclosure of classified information by allies of Dick Cheney, going back to the very damaging and illegal disclosure of the identity of Valeria Plame, a covert CIA operative, in a clumsy effort to discredit her husband, former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, for his exposure of the Niger/yellowcake fakery inserted into the President’s State of the Union Address in January.

Second, an Israeli military-connected think-tank has released a report on the manipulation of Iraq intelligence by the Israeli intelligence services, which are described as the “third partner” in the Iraq intelligence failure, along with the United States and Britain. But the connection is far deeper: As *EIR* has shown, there was a crucial Israeli component in the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans fakery, which fed cooked intelligence directly into the office of Vice President Cheney.

It is an open secret on Capitol Hill that it was Vice President Cheney—not Senate Majority Leader Frist—who shut

down the Senate Intelligence Committee probe of the intelligence hoaxes leading up to the war. The key to the shutdown scheme was the theft of a Democratic staff memo, prepared for Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.), which was then leaked to radio talking head Sean Hannity.

Misconduct a Lot Worse Than Lott

Within hours of the theft and leak of the staff document, Cheney was, according to a number of Congressional sources, in touch with Frist, demanding that he lean on Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), to shut down the probe, on the specious grounds that the Democrats were pursuing partisan advantage, by probing the Administration’s abuse of the intelligence process.

Frist obliged, and within days, announced the wholesale shutdown of the Senate intelligence panel; the committee has not held a regular weekly meeting since.

Simultaneously, a plumbers’ break-in was occurring at the offices of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Democratic staff memos, addressed to Senators Richard Durbin (Ill.) and Edward Kennedy (Mass.), were stolen from the committee’s computer files, and passed on to the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Times*, and other neo-conservative media outlets. Durbin, incensed at the theft and leak, demanded a full investigation by the Capitol Hill Police and the sergeant-at-arms of the Senate. The Judiciary Committee offices were sealed off, computer servers and tapes were confiscated, and a serious investigation was launched.

The initial response of Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) was to ridicule Durbin’s charges. “Whenever they get their hands caught in the cookie jar, then they start to attack the process,” Hatch said. But the whole affair soon blew up in Hatch’s face, when he was forced to

admit that it was one of his own staff members who had pilfered and leaked the Durbin and Kennedy memos. On Nov. 25, Hatch, declaring that he was “shocked” and “mortified,” announced that the staffer had been placed on administrative leave with pay, and further acknowledged that one of his former staffers was also under suspicion.

The *Washington Post* revealed on Nov. 28 that the former Hatch staffer was Miguel Miranda—who is now on the staff of Cheney’s asset Bill Frist, after having left Hatch’s staff in February.

On Dec. 4, Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche called for Bill Frist to resign as Majority Leader, because of his involvement in shutting down the Intelligence Committee, and his staffer’s involvement in leaking the stolen Judiciary Committee documents.

Government by Intimidation

Cheney’s hooligan tactics reflect a growing sense of desperation, that the Senate intelligence probe was about to turn up hard evidence that the Vice President has been running a government of intimidation, fraud, and leaks, at least since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

The most egregious incident was the July 2003 leak of the identity of Valerie Plame. Her husband, Joseph Wilson, conducted the CIA fact-finding mission to Niger in February 2002, and reported back to the Vice President, via the CIA, that there was no evidence that Saddam Hussein was seeking to acquire uranium “yellowcake” from that African country.

The leaking of the identity of a covert U.S. intelligence officer by a government official is a felony, punishable by up to ten years in jail. The probe into the Plame leak to syndicated columnist Robert Novak is still under way; however, Attorney General John Ashcroft, a staunch Cheney ally, has refused to appoint an independent counsel to investigate the affair, leaving many convinced that the inquiry will be sabotaged in order to protect Cheney’s hide.

U.S. intelligence sources have reported to this news service that the Plame leak was part of a “Get Joe Wilson” campaign, launched in Cheney’s office by no later than March 2003—three months before Wilson wrote in the *New York Times* about his mission to Niger.

An Independent Commission

In the face of the Cheney-led efforts to shut down any serious Senate probe, a number of leading Democrats are pressing for the formation of an independent commission, to “examine and evaluate the collection, analysis, reporting, use, and dissemination of intelligence related to Iraq and Operation Iraqi Freedom.” The proposal is the subject of a bill, S. 1946, introduced on Nov. 24 by Sen. John Corzine (D-N.J.), under the title, “Independent Iraq Intelligence Commission Act.” The formation of such a commission was cited in the leaked Democratic staff memo, as something that would become necessary at the point of serious Republican obstruc-

tion of the Iraq intelligence probe.

Yet another leak of classified information was done by the Cheney crowd in an effort to bolster their fraudulent case for the invasion of Iraq: This was a top-secret 16-page memorandum prepared for the Senate Intelligence Committee by Doug Feith, which purported to document the historical links between Iraq and al-Qaeda, using long-discredited raw intelligence tidbits. The document was illegally leaked to the leading neo-con journal *Weekly Standard*, which published major excerpts.

The Feith leak is now the subject of at least two investigations: the Senate Intelligence Committee and the CIA have asked the Justice Department to investigate, and it has been reported that a Defense Department counterintelligence unit is also investigating.

Israeli Investigation Urged

On Dec. 4, Israeli Knesset member Yossi Sarid called for the creation of a committee to investigate the exaggerated Israeli intelligence assessments which were used by the Israeli government to prepare for “threats that did not exist” from Iraq. Sarid’s call was triggered by the publication of a report from the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies of Tel Aviv University, entitled “The War in Iraq: An Intelligence Failure?” The study, prepared by retired Gen. Shlomo Brom, stated that the investigations in the United States and Britain on pre-war Iraq intelligence overlook “the third party in this intelligence failure, Israel.”

The deeper story behind this, is that which *EIR* has repeatedly documented, of the close ties between the Pentagon’s rogue intelligence operation—Feith’s Office of Special Plans (OSP)—and Israeli intelligence, particularly a parallel rogue Israeli operation located in the office of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. We reported, for example, in the Aug. 22, 2003 issue of *EIR*:

“Sources in both the U.S.A. and Israel have additionally confirmed that a parallel Office of Special Plans was quietly established in the Office of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, to coordinate with the Pentagon ‘secret team.’” *EIR* cited eyewitness accounts by Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski (USAF-ret.), who served in the Pentagon Near East and South Asia (NESA) office, which housed OSP, about meetings between high-level Israeli military delegations and Feith. We also noted reports about secret Pentagon meetings between Feith and two top Israeli officials, Interior Minister Uzi Landau and Brig. Gen. David Tzur, to work out the creation of a joint U.S.-Israeli counterterrorism office in Washington. That meeting took place on June 27, 2002. OSP was formally established inside NESA two months later.

These are among many leads which should guide any serious investigation in either the United States or Israel, which will uncover the trail of false intelligence which was “stovepiped” directly to Dick Cheney’s office, to concoct a fraudulent case for a failing war.