

STOP MAKING SCOTTIE MCC RICH!!

Cannonfire is right. People have gotten way too excited over this Scottie McC "revelation." I'd advise you all to look closely at what John Dean had to say about the flap on Olbermann:

Dean: Well, there's very little that's specific in this. I actually thought about calling the publisher today. He's a very able publisher—Peter Osnos, Public Affairs, good journalist. He knows exactly what he's doing. But if he says there's not much more, and that's the indication, I think that's maybe why they put this out as a good tease, to get bookstores interested in the book. [my emphasis]

Scottie McC's publisher has pulled off quite the coup—taken a detail that was, largely, already known, and used it to cause a stir about a book that will not yet be published for another 6 months. Already, Dodd is calling for an investigation, folks are calling for HJC or Waxman to hold a hearing. What the left has done is read one publishing blurb designed to generate this kind of buzz, and played right into the plan. Congratulations. You're all making Scottie McC rich.

What Scottie Said

That said, I guess it would pay to look more closely at what we know, so that everyone can calm down and stop putting dollars into Scottie McC's pockets. Let's look again at what Scottie says (and has said before, and his spokespeople have said since).

The most powerful leader in the world had called upon me to speak on his behalf and help restore credibility he lost amid the failure to find weapons of mass

destruction in Iraq. So I stood at the White House briefing room podium in front of the glare of the bright lights for the better part of two weeks and publicly exonerated two of the senior-most aides in the White House: Karl Rove and Scooter Libby.

There was one problem. It was not true.

I had unknowingly passed along false information. And five of the highest ranking officials in the administration were involved in my doing so: Rove, Libby, the vice President, the President's chief of staff, and the president himself. -from *What Happened*

Or, to translate:

- It was not true that Rove and Libby had nothing to do with the leak of Valerie Wilson's identity.

We've known this detail—that Rove and Libby were involved in leaking Valerie Wilson's identity since Fall 2005 and earlier.

- Scottie unknowingly passed on false information.

Scottie has been saying this for years, as well, ever since his tiny credibility took a hit when it became clear his public exonerations were false. In other words, Scottie still maintains that he, at least, had no idea the public exoneration was false.

- Rove, Libby, the Vice President, Andy Card, and the President "were involved" in having Scottie "unknowingly pass on false

information."

Please note (again, as Cannonfire points out), Scottie says nothing about the President being "knowingly" involved. He doesn't even detail how the President was involved. Given the way this Administration builds in plausible deniability, and given the degree to which the leak of Valerie Wilson's name included a "secret mission" (as Libby lawyer Bill Jeffress called it) involving just Bush, Cheney, and Libby, I'm not sure that Scottie McC would know even if Bush were the mastermind of this leak and cover-up.

And he certainly doesn't say so in this excerpt.

What We Already Know

As I said in this post and Jeff said in the comments, the only thing that is sort of new is the involvement of Bush and Andy Card in getting Scottie to publicly exonerate two people who had been lying about their involvement in the leaks about Valerie Wilson. That's because we already know that Cheney and Libby conspired to get Scottie to give Libby a public exoneration (and frankly, as you'll see below, we knew of Card's role, too).

For example, here's a passage from the trial in which David Addington—David Addington, of all people!!!—explained how he discovered that Cheney had done something that even he, Mr. Unitary Executive, thought was improper: push Scottie McC to publicly exonerate Libby.

Fitzgerald: The thrust of what you recall is that Scott McClellan, the Press Secretary for the President of the United States, had gone out and made a statement exonerating Karl Rove of any misconduct in connection with the controversy surrounding the disclosure of the fact that Mrs. Wilson worked at the CIA, correct?

Addington: Yes, and essentially "the

reason this sticks in my mind is I had a conversation not too many days later with Dan Bartlett, who was then the assistant to the President for communications. And by this point, something had been said "I frankly don't remember what" again, by the press office, and it included Mr. Libby this time. And I made the comment to Mr. Bartlett, you know, I don't know why you are making these statements about, you know, this case "and I will explain why in a second.

But his reaction was, "Well, your boss is the one that wanted us to do it." And then I shut up.

[snip]

Fitzgerald: And when Mr. Bartlett said your boss wanted him to do that, your boss is Vice President Cheney, right?

Addington: Yes sir.

And here is the part of the note recording the conversation between Libby and Cheney that show Cheney's notes making clear that he's going to knock some heads to make sure Libby gets his exoneration.



There are several key points about this note. First, as I said, it makes it crystal clear that Cheney is going to knock some heads together to make sure this happens. But the other key point is what Cheney stops short of saying:

Not going to protect one staffer & sacrifice the guy the Pres that was asked to stick his neck in the meat grinder because of the incompetence of others.

In other words, when Cheney was preparing to knock some heads together, he was thinking

specifically about how unjust it was for Libby to be accused considering Cheney's understand that the President asked Libby to stick his neck in a meat grinder—presumably, meaning Bush asked Libby to lead the response to Wilson. This is consistent with the fact that, just before OVP started investigating the Wilsons with new vigor on June 9, 2003, Bush told Libby he was concerned about the Kristof allegations. Cheney stopped short of describing Bush's involvement in writing. But there's at least a good case to be made that that's what Cheney was thinking: When Cheney prepared to knock some heads together, he did so keeping Bush's role in mind.

One more thing about Cheney. We know that his lifelong acolyte, David Addington, recognized his actions here as incriminating as soon as he saw the note.

Wells: And, in fact, when you saw that particular document, you picked up the telephone and called Terry O'Donnell, counsel to the Vice President and told him about the document?

Addington: He and I may have communicated about it. Whether it was a telephone call or not, I can't say. I might have phoned him. I might have shown it to him. I think probably a phone call.

Addington sees the notes, and contacts Terry O'Donnell, suggesting Addington saw the note as evidence that might incriminate Dick.

What We Already Know about Bush and Card

Now, there's even been evidence that Bush and Card were involved in this process. For example, when Libby explained the public exoneration in his grand jury appearance, he described Card's involvement.

A. If memory serves, and it doesn't always, I think I was at the — the, the first time this sort of came up, I was

at the – at the White House, I think, and this came out and believe I went to talk to Andy Card and Scott McClellan about the time it came out. I'd have to check the dates, but I'll explain as best as I recall it, if that's okay. And Scott said, well, we don't want to go down the whole list. And Andy said something about the same. And I said, you know, I didn't feel that was quite right since I didn't talk to Novak [ed. though of course Libby did speak to Novak] and I didn't think it was fair that they were saying Karl Rove didn't speak to Novak but not saying I wasn't the one who spoke to Novak.

But at least according to the convicted perjurer Libby, he didn't tell Scottie or Card that he and Rove had both spoken to Novak.

Q. And when you spoke about the fact that Mr. Rove had been cleared did you indicate to either one of them that in fact Mr. Rove had spoken to Mr. Novak some time prior to July 14th?

A. No, I don't think I did.

Q. Was there a reason you didn't share that fact with them?

A. It wasn't what I was most concerned about. What I was most concerned about was getting them to say something I about that I had not been the one that spoke to Novak.

[snip]

Q. In your conversations with Card and McClellan or anyone else did – as far as you know, did anyone else in the White House know that Mr. Rove and Mr. Novak had spoken before July 14th?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. As you sit here today do you know if anyone in the White House besides you and Mr. Rove is aware of the conversation that took place between Mr. Rove and Novak prior to July 14th?

A. I don't think so.

Libby's testimony, whether it was true or not, would corroborate the notion that both Scottie and Card had no clue that Rove and Libby were talking to Novak.

Now, Libby gets all hazy when Fitzgerald asks him about how Cheney ensured that Libby was indeed exonerated.

Q. And you wouldn't remember if the Vice President told you, hey, I just picked up the phone and called Andrew Card or Scott McClellan and you're being taken care of?

A. As I say, I, think, I think he did do that at one point and I just don't remember whether I actually tried with him fruitlessly the first time when they didn't change it or if it was the second time.

It's not clear whether he's protecting Cheney—or Bush. But he definitely backs off confirming details of Cheney's involvement in the public exoneration. That's a point that remained unclear up until and during the trial, when, after claiming Cheney got Scottie to exonerate Libby in his opening statement, Ted Wells included Bush in the mix in an attempt to prevent the video of Scottie exonerating Libby from coming into evidence (thanks to Jeff for pointing me back to this citation, which he found while working on his book).

THE COURT: Does the Vice President sort of become his surrogate to deliver the message to the White House press people

to get them to act? I guess we would need
â€œ

MR. WELLS: I don't know. That's what I
mean, you are going down a road where,
put it like this. First â€œ

THE COURT: There maybe a link because I
guess we would need the Vice President's
testimony as to what he did that then
resulted in McClellan, if that's true,
making the statement.

MR. WELLS: Whatever the Vice President
did, he did not do it as Mr. Libby's
surrogate. The Vice President did what
he decided on his own.

THE COURT: If he did it at Mr. Libby's
behest, I mean â€œ

MR. WELLS: That's where I'm drawing the
distinction. I think what that rule is
about, if somebody is your agent, but I
think the Vice President made his own â€œ

[snip]

MR. WELLS: I don't think the transcript
is going to answer it because I don't
think anybody knows. I think you would
have to talk to President Bush because
he's probably somewhere in that chain.

MR. FITZGERALD: Your Honor, I think the
transcript both in the Grand Jury and in
Mr. Wells' opening says that the Vice
President did this for Mr. Libby. And
the note, it just says it right

THE COURT: The opening statement is not
evidence.

MR. FITZGERALD: But it is uncomfortable
when someone takes an evidentiary
position inconsistent with how they
opened. As far as the White House, the
White House was throwing Mr. Libby under
the bus. Mr. Libby is trying to save
himself through the Vice President. Now

we're getting an implication that it must have been the President involved in this. The testimony in the Grand Jury is that Mr. Libby went to people to get the clearing statement. Then he went to the Vice President. And that he understood the Vice President interceded for him. We've heard evidence, not from opening statement but from Mr. Addington, that when he went to Mr. Bartlett and said you people shouldn't basically be making these statements, Mr. Bartlett says, that decision was your boss, your boss, meaning the Vice President. That was yesterday. We have the note, that's Government's Exhibit 532 in evidence, from the Vice President: Has to happen today; call out the key press, saying same thing about Scooter as Karl. This is not "â€

THE COURT: What date is that?

MR. FITZGERALD: It's not dated but it's prior to the statement. So it's probably around October 4. This is what Mr. Cheney, the Vice President, wrote. It's not a request to the President. It's a direction, and my understanding is the Vice President spoke to Mr. McClellan.

THE COURT: Who's that to? Does it say who he gave those to?

MR. FITZGERALD: No, but Mr. Libby testified in the Grand Jury that these are the words he wanted Mr. McClellan to issue, and Mr. McClellan then made a statement. We have evidence from Mr. Addington on cross examination yesterday, that when he made a comment to Mr. Bartlett about why this statement was made, Mr. Bartlett responded "That was your boss." I think there is no dispute here that the decision to issue that statement did not come from the President. It came from the Vice

President. There is no dispute that Mr. Libby asked the Vice President to intercede. Mr. Libby also asked Mr. McClellan to intercede. It got done. I think that's right down smack down the middle of a statement by a person authorized by a party to make it.

MR. WELLS: I do not believe those are the facts. I do not believe the evidence will show that Vice President Cheney went to Andrew Card. I think maybe we ought to wait until the Vice President gets here to find out what happened. But I do not believe his recitation is based on the facts or is factual. [my emphasis]

In other words, Ted Wells wants to muddy the issue by suggesting that Bush was in the chain of command between Cheney and Andy Card. Yes, McClellan's comments seem to confirm that—but they in no way confirm that Bush knew that Libby had been leaking Valerie Wilson's identity, and they certainly don't confirm that McClellan knows whether Bush knew of that fact.

Hearings and Investigations

Now, don't get me wrong. I'd love to have Congress look at the evidence that Bush (and, more importantly, Cheney) were directly involved in Valerie Wilson's outing the cover-up of that outing. I'm thrilled if folks can force Scottie into the uncomfortable position of testifying before Congress about what he knows—using his book as an excuse to overcome any privilege claims. And if this can help Joe and Valerie get their lawsuit back on track, all the better.

But if anyone is going to do some investigating, they should do so on the premise that Scottie's book is one weak piece of evidence—from among a sea of much stronger evidence—that Cheney, at least, was involved in the leaking of Valerie Wilson's identity and the cover-up of that leak. We're not going to get Bush until we go through

Cheney, anyway, and with Cheney, there is already clear evidence of his foreknowledge and involvement, which we don't have with Bush, probably not even if Scottie testifies.

And for chrissake, can we avoid playing into the publicist's game and making Scottie a mint off of this?

To that end, I'd respectfully suggest that instead of saying:

Omigod! Scottie says Bush was personally and knowingly involved in the cover-up of the leak!!! Call Congress! Call the cops!!

Can we try this:

Scott McClellan's book apparently provides more evidence—on top of existing compelling evidence—that the knowledge of the Valerie Wilson leak and cover-up of that leak extend far beyond Scooter Libby. His book invites Congress to hold a hearing on what he knows. But along with McClellan, any hearing should include other key witnesses, including Dan Bartlett and David Addington, who can speak directly to the intentionality of this cover-up.

Congress didn't do so great with their commutation hearing. Let's not set them up for failure and disappointment with underwhelming Scottie testimony.