

DICK VETTED THE INTELLIGENCE TWO WEEKS AGO

The NYT provides more details about the intelligence collected in mid-2007 that confirmed the judgment that Iran suspended its nukes program back in 2003. In addition to the intercepted communications, there were also notes from Iran's military leaders.

Most interesting—at least to those who obsess about the timing of all this—is that the intelligence analysts had to present the raw intelligence to Cheney.

In the end, American intelligence officials rejected that theory, though they were challenged to defend that conclusion in a meeting two weeks ago in the White House situation room, in which the notes and deliberations were described to the most senior members of President Bush's national security team, including Vice President Dick Cheney.

"It was a pretty vivid exchange," said one participant in the conversation.

Good to see the Vice President hasn't lost his affection for twisting arms.

Here's how this looks in our big timeline:

November 13: McConnell says NIE will be done "in about a month" but that judgments will not be released; he also says he would resign if results were "cherry picked"

November 16: At OPEC, the Saudi Foreign Minister refuses to make a public statement about ditching the dollar—but he says the economic ministers should discuss it

Week of November 19: Intelligence Officials present underlying intelligence to Cheney and others at meeting in Sit Room.

November 22: Mohammed el Baradei states Iran is cooperating, though IAEA still has questions about its nuclear program

November 23: The Saudis confirm attendance at Annapolis Conference; on the same day, they send the conservative Nawaz Sharif back to Pakistan to contest elections

November 25: Nawaz Sharif returns to Pakistan

November 26: Syria confirms attendance at Annapolis Conference

November 26: Per Seymour Hersh, Bush tells Ehud Olmert what's in the NIE.

November 27: The Annapolis Peace Conference

November 28: The day Hadley claims Bush was briefed on the NIE; Bush meets with Olmert again; in Pakistan, Musharraf relinquishes military position

November 29: Khalilzad submits a resolution

That is, the Sit Room meeting took place in the same week as Mohammed el Baradei gave Iran a relatively clean report (raising the question whether IAEA had the same intelligence—and whether they got the notes the NYT described before or after the US did). It also took place just as the Annapolis meeting fell into place.

And I still think the press should be asking: if Dick had seen—and twisted the arms of—this intelligence two weeks ago, then why didn't he even tell Bush about it? Or did he?