

BUSH ADMINISTRATION TRIES TO REVERSE A1 CUT-OUT DECLASSIFICATION

Remember back in the halcyon days when people still believed Judy Miller was a journalist? The Bush Administration repeatedly used her as a cut-out, leaking highly classified information to her (like intelligence about aluminum tubes, mobile bioweapons labs, and even covert agents' identities). She would then publish a story on the first page of the NYT. And Administration officials would quote her story, now treating the highly classified information as if it had been declassified. It worked like a charm until Judy's credibility got so damaged with her Iraq reporting that she couldn't oblige Cheney by writing an article leaking Valerie Wilson's identity.

In 1992, the opposite occurred. Someone leaked a draft of Defense Secretary Dick Cheney's Defense Policy Guidance to the NYT.

The document was provided to The New York Times by an official who believes this post-cold-war strategy debate should be carried out in the public domain.

[snip]

In contrast, the new draft sketches a world in which there is one dominant military power whose leaders "must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role."

The NYT published chunks of the draft, which shocked voters and allies. So poor little Scooter Libby, always the faithful acolyte, had to rewrite the draft to hide Cheney's aggressive

nature, perhaps believing they could persuade presidential year voters that Bush's aides weren't a bunch of nut-cases before the election that November.

Now the National Security Archive has published a series of those drafts, including a few memos from Libby, now a felon, to the guy he'd later commit a felony to protect (unfortunately, there's none of Libby's chicken scratch notes, so all the skills we've developed reading trial exhibits will be wasted).

Pathetically, the Bush Administration has refused to declassify some of the same passages that appeared in the NYT almost sixteen years ago.

Remarkably, these new releases censor a half dozen large sections of text that *The New York Times* printed on March 8, 1992, as well as a number of phrases that were officially published by the Pentagon in January 1993. "On close inspection none of those deleted passages actually meet the standards for classification because embarrassment is not a legal basis for secrecy," remarked Tom Blanton, director of the Archive." The language that the *Times* publicized can be seen side-by-side with the relevant portions of the February 18, 1992 draft (see document 3 below) that was the subject of the leak.

Apparently, Cheney still believes only he is entitled to use the A1 Cut-Out to insta-declassify classified intelligence.

I plan to return to these documents—they're a fascinating window into Cheney's thinking. But for now, go check out the reconstructed draft the NSA did, replacing the redacted passages with the content that has already been made public.