

DID CHENEY RENT ONE OF RUMMY'S RENT-A-GENERALS TO TRY TO REFUTE JOE WILSON?

I'm working on a catalog of Rummy's Rent-A-Generals. But I couldn't help but notice this particular Rent-A-General.

On Friday, April 14, with what came to be called the "Generals' Revolt" dominating headlines, Mr. Rumsfeld instructed aides to summon military analysts to a meeting with him early the next week, records show. When an aide urged a short delay to "give our big guys on the West Coast a little more time to buy a ticket and get here," Mr. Rumsfeld's office insisted that "the boss" wanted the meeting fast "for impact on the current story."

That same day, Pentagon officials helped two Fox analysts, General McInerney and General Vallely, write an opinion article for The Wall Street Journal defending Mr. Rumsfeld.

"Starting to write it now," General Vallely wrote to the Pentagon that afternoon. "Any input for the article," he added a little later, "will be much appreciated." Mr. Rumsfeld's office quickly forwarded talking points and statistics to rebut the notion of a spreading revolt.

"Vallely is going to use the numbers," a Pentagon official reported that afternoon.

[snip]

Many also shared with Mr. Bush's national security team a belief that pessimistic war coverage broke the

nation's will to win in Vietnam, and there was a mutual resolve not to let that happen with this war.

This was a major theme, for example, with Paul E. Vallely, a Fox News analyst from 2001 to 2007. A retired Army general who had specialized in psychological warfare, Mr. Vallely co-authored a paper in 1980 that accused American news organizations of failing to defend the nation from "enemy" propaganda during Vietnam.

"We lost the war – not because we were outfought, but because we were out Psyoped," he wrote. He urged a radically new approach to psychological operations in future wars – taking aim at not just foreign adversaries but domestic audiences, too. He called his approach "MindWar" – using network TV and radio to "strengthen our national will to victory."

[snip]

Back in Washington, Pentagon officials kept a nervous eye on how the trip translated on the airwaves.

Uncomfortable facts had bubbled up during the trip. One briefer, for example, mentioned that the Army was resorting to packing inadequately armored Humvees with sandbags and Kevlar blankets. Descriptions of the Iraqi security forces were withering. "They can't shoot, but then again, they don't," one officer told them, according to one participant's notes.

"I saw immediately in 2003 that things were going south," General Vallely, one of the Fox analysts on the trip, recalled in an interview with The Times.

The Pentagon, though, need not have worried.

"You can't believe the progress," General Vallely told Alan Colmes of Fox News upon his return. He predicted the insurgency would be "down to a few numbers" within months.

So let's see. General Vallely,

- Believed it was more important to lie to the public than let them question the purpose for war
- Took Pentagon talking points and used them for a WSJ op-ed
- Is documented by NYT's sources to have stated publicly the precise opposite of what he acknowledged observing in Iraq

All in the name of hiding the fact that Rummy had no credibility with his generals and in an attempt to sustain support for the war.

So why should we care?

Well, you might recall that Paul Vallely claimed, in November 2005 (just days after Libby was indicted), that Joe Wilson had outed his wife to Vallely in a Fox green room in 2002.

A retired Army general says the man at the center of the CIA leak controversy, Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson, revealed his wife Valerie Plame's employment with the agency in a casual conversation more than a year before she allegedly was "outed" by the White House through a columnist.

Maj. Gen. Paul Vallely told WorldNetDaily that Wilson mentioned Plame's status as a CIA employee over

the course of at least three, possibly five, conversations in 2002 in the Fox News Channel's "green room" in Washington, D.C., as they waited to appear on air as analysts.

[snip]

Vallely says, according to his recollection, Wilson mentioned his wife's job in the spring of 2002 – more than a year before Robert Novak's July 14, 2003, column identified her, citing senior administration officials, as "an Agency operative on weapons of mass destruction."

Now, far be it for me to suggest that General Vallely lied—outright—when he invented a story that would protect Libby, Novak, and Cheney. After all, that claim has been made before, so I don't need to claim it anew. And I notice that Libby's defense team ultimately decided that Vallely wasn't going to help their case—though Vallely was listed as a witness in Libby's trial, he spent precisely as long on the witness stand as Dick Cheney did.

So I'm not claiming the news that Vallely is a lying hack is **new**. Rather, I'm pointing out that Vallely's stated motives for lying about the war...

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... So closely parallel the motives he might have had for lying in order to pretend that Dick Cheney wasn't desperate to hide the fact, in 2003, that he had lied us into war.

That, and I think it's rather sweet that Rummy lent his old friend Dick Cheney one of his Rent-A-Generals in his time of need.

Update: Joe Wilson responds (via email):

I too was curious when I read the NYT piece but my disgust that he would leave the troops hanging out to dry in order to do the Pentagon's dirty business overwhelmed any thoughts of his feeble attempts to suggest I had told his wife of Valerie's covert status. Our troops deserve not just our support as fellow citizens but even more the support of generals in whom they entrust their lives.