

THE ANTHRAX PROSECUTOR: THE DAUGHTER OF THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY FOR BUSHCO'S "GERM BOY"

Guess who they've got prosecuting the anthrax case? Amy Jeffress, daughter of Bill Jeffress, the guy who was last seen trying to keep Scooter Libby, known within the Administration as "Mr. Germ," out of the pokey. Yeah. That gives me confidence in the investigation.

First, from an account of today's meeting with Judge Lamberth (h/t JimWhite and bmaz):

U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth ordered the release of hundreds of pages of documents, including more than a dozen search warrants issued as the government closed in on Ivins in an investigation into events that killed five, sickened dozens and rattled the nation a few weeks after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks.

The long-sealed material was expected to be available to the public within hours.

Lamberth ordered the release after consultation with Amy Jeffress, a national security prosecutor at the Department of Justice. [my emphasis]

Next, the wedding announcement showing who Amy Jeffress' daddy is:

The bride, 34, is known as Amy and is keeping her surname. She is an assistant United States attorney in Washington. She graduated magna cum laude from Williams College, where she was elected

to Phi Beta Kappa. She received a master's degree in political science from the Free University in Berlin and a law degree from Yale University.

The bride is the daughter of Judith and William Jeffress Jr. of Arlington, Va. Her mother is a social worker at the Adoption Service Information Agency in Washington. Her father is a partner in Miller, Cassidy, Larocca & Lewin, a Washington law firm where the bridegroom is an associate. [my emphasis]

And finally, here's Jeremy Scahill on Libby's role as "Germ Boy" within the administration.

In mid-2002, as they struggled desperately to sell the war, these key players in "Plamegate" were engaged in full-out offensive aimed at convincing Americans that the country faced an imminent threat of a smallpox attack. To underscore this "threat," Libby began fanatically pressing to have the entire US population preemptively vaccinated against smallpox (which was declared eradicated in 1980).

[snip]

What Hauer and his colleagues at HHS may not have known is that smallpox was a career-long obsession of Libby's—so much so that his nickname in the administration was "Germ Boy."

[snip]

More than a decade later, Libby was facing renewed frustration with another group of experts challenging his obsession. Hauer says that when he and other public health officials presented their opposition to Libby's "hysterical" universal smallpox vaccination scheme, the pressure from Cheney's office increased. In particular, Hauer says

that one of Cheney's top Homeland Security advisers, Carol Kuntz (who worked as Libby's assistant at the Pentagon during the Gulf War), became "downright offensive" toward Hauer, saying "It was very clear that I was not giving her the answers she wanted or telling her what she wanted to hear."

"We got a lot of pressure from Carol and the vice president's office," Hauer recalls. "The vice president went to CDC and was briefed on this and we certainly were under the impression that this was a real threat...Whether or not it was there or not, we were being told it was."

Scooter Libby was the point man in the Administration for raising the specter of biological threats—he was behind Cheney's efforts, just as the anthrax attack took place, to push Bush to adopt a bio-terrorism preparedness plan. Here's Jane Mayer:

After the September 11 attacks, Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, screened a video of the Dark Winter exercise [showing the effects of a smallpox outbreak] for Cheney, showing that the United States was virtually defenseless against smallpox or any other biological attack. Cheney in particular was so stricken by the potential for attack that he insisted that the rest of the National Security Council undergo a gruesome briefing on it on September 20, 2001. When the White House sensor registered the presence of such poisons less than a month later, many, including Cheney, believed a nightmare was unfolding. "It was a really nerve-jangling time," the former official said.

In time, the Situation Room alarm turned out to be false. But on October 22, the

Secret Service reported that it had found what it believed to be additional anthrax traces on an automated letter-opening device used on White House mail. By then, Cheney had convinced the President to support a \$1.6 billion bioterrorism-preparedness program. Cheney argued that every citizen in the country should be vaccinated against smallpox.

Everyone's been talking for a week about how Ivins had this urgent desire to get the country to take bioterrorism more seriously, and that was sufficient motive for him to start sending anthrax to Democratic senators. But Scooter Libby, even more than Ivins, was pushing that issue, during precisely the period when the anthrax attack hit.

Now, frankly, Bill Jeffress was easily Libby's best lawyer. If Amy is anything like her dad, I'm sure she's a superb lawyer (and as an Amherst grad, I have to grudgingly admit that her degree from Williams suggests she's pretty smart, too). And I have no reason to believe that Libby had anything to do with the anthrax attack (though some of his close allies were behind the suggestion that Iraq was responsible).

Isn't this kind of a huge conflict of interest?