

WAPO: ROVE SPINS HIS ROLE IN US ATTORNEY FIRINGS

Rove has, apparently, just finished up his second interview with the House Judiciary Committee on his role in the US Attorney firings. That apparently frees the WaPo to reveal—and debunk—details of an interview Rove had with the NYT and WaPo earlier this month to spin his role in the firings.

In an hour-long interview with The Post and the New York Times this month, Rove described himself as a "conduit" of grievances from lawmakers and others about the performance of home-state prosecutors. The interview was conducted on the condition that it not be released until Rove's House testimony concluded. He said he did not recall several events in the timeline because of his busy job and asserted that he had done nothing to influence criminal cases, an allegation by Democrats that has dogged him for years.

Hmm. He was so busy he forgot. Where have I heard that excuse before? Oh yeah: Rove's co-leaker, Scooter Libby, in the CIA Leak case.

It's not entirely clear where the emails the WaPo got came from—they may well have come from Rove, too, in an attempt to pre-empt whatever leaks will come out of his HJC interview. The story includes a predictable quote from Robert Luskin, the guy who used this kind of pre-emptive leak to great advantage during the CIA Leak case. And while they do provide new levels of detail, they don't tell us anything we didn't already assume.

The emails WaPo received show Scott Jennings passing on Pete Domenici's request that David Iglesias be fired directly to Rove.

Complaints about Iglesias began at least a year before he was relieved of his job, according to documents reviewed by The Post. Then-Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), his chief of staff, Steve Bell, and GOP lawyers in the state lobbied aggressively to oust the prosecutor. But the activity accelerated in fall 2006.

In an Oct. 10, 2006, e-mail from White House political affairs aide Scott Jennings to Rove, Jennings reported:

"I received a call from Steve Bell tonight. . . . Last week Sen. Domenici reached the chief of staff and asked that we remove the U.S. Atty. Steve wanted to make sure we all understood that they couldn't be more serious about this request."

The WaPo also describes documents that show—contrary to a withdrawn claim made by DOJ—Rove personally intervening to get Tim Griffin a US Attorney job.

Responding to questions about another little-understood event, Rove told reporters in the interview this month that he had not seen a letter that Justice Department officials prepared and sent to the Senate on Feb. 23, 2007. The letter stated that "the department is not aware of Karl Rove playing any role in the decision to appoint [protege] Mr. Griffin" to a top job in Little Rock.

The Justice Department later retracted the statement, which the inspector general concluded was "misleading." In the interview, Rove said that he had "nothing" to do with the letter. "I'm not even sure I was still there at that point." Rove did not leave the White House for six more months, in late August 2007.

But internal White House correspondence dating to two years earlier suggests that job prospects for Timothy Griffin, who had worked for Rove in the administration, were a hot topic of conversation. In a Feb. 11, 2005, e-mail, Rove wrote to deputy Sara Taylor: "Give him options. Keep pushing for Justice and let him decide. I want him on the team." Then White House counsel Miers e-mailed Taylor a month later, writing, "Sara, Karl asked me to forward you a list of locations where we may consider replacing the USAs..."

Rove himself suggested Little Rock, where Cummins was U.S. attorney, as a post for Griffin, reminding Miers in March 2005 that "that's where he's from." The next day, Sara Taylor forwarded some communications about Griffin to RNC chairman Ken Mehlman, who wrote, "let me know his reaction," according to the e-mails.

Of course, that doesn't prove Rove knew of the letter—only the reasons why DOJ had to withdraw the claim that Rove was not involved: because Rove had long been pushing Griffin for precisely the job he was given, the Little Rock US Attorney job.

None of this, of course, is even remotely surprising. But it does suggest we'll have these documents—and Rove's interview transcript—in the relatively near future.

Update: Yup! Robert Luskin succeeded in getting the NYT and WaPo to do his work for him in spectacular fashion! Here are details from the NYT story. The meeting took place in Luskin's office.

"I can't even tell you who brought it up," Mr. Rove said earlier this month in the office of his lawyer, Robert D. Luskin.

Luskin pretends it was just the cases that caused Rove to clam up.

Mr. Luskin has said Mr. Rove had been willing to answer questions about the firings, but the disputes have meant that until now Mr. Rove's role remained largely unknown. Some Democrats had speculated that he operated as the behind-the-scenes architect of the firings, a role Mr. Rove has denied.

Which of course makes no sense—since the Dannehy probe is ongoing.

And Rove managed to deny the most potentially explosive issue—that he supported firing all the US Attorneys.

Mr. Rove said he opposed one early suggestion to dismiss all of the more than 90 United States attorneys in a single mass dismissal.

No word on whether or not there's proof to back this up—but remember, three different witnesses in Chicago testified that Rove had promised to get Pat Fitzgerald fired, and Fitz was closing in on Rove's role in the Plame scandal at about this time.