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09/20/05 08:45 PM**Plamegate: The John Bolton Connection** [ Post [293985411](#) ]**Category:** News & Opinion (General) **Topic:** Government**Synopsis:****Source:** [The Huffington Post](#)**Published:** September 20, 2005 **Author:** Arianna Huffington**For Education and Discussion Only. Not for Commercial Use.**

I'm now hearing that the investigation may be inching closer to never-confirmed UN Ambassador John Bolton.

According to two sources, Bolton's former chief of staff, Fred Fleitz, was at least one of the sources of the classified information about Valerie Plame that flowed through the Bush administration and eventually made its way into Bob Novak's now infamous column.

After delving into Fleitz, I can safely report that he is, at a minimum, a very interesting character.

He is a career CIA agent who Bolton handpicked to join him at Foggy Bottom, having gotten to know him during the administration of the first President Bush. While working as Bolton's top aide, Fleitz also continued his work in the CIA's WINPAC division, the group responsible for some of the worst prewar intelligence on Iraq (for instance, they were, among other things, big fans of Curveball and had "high confidence" in the presence of WMD in Iraq).

"I perform liaison function for the [CIA] and Mr. Bolton," Fleitz told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April 2005 [pdf]. What he would have said if he'd been given truth serum is: "I've kept my CIA portfolio, which made it easier to become an intel-gathering machine for Bolton, who in turn was Cheney's spear-carrier in the State Department -- working tirelessly to undermine Powell and Armitage while, at the same time, feeding the intel to Miller and the New York Times."

Over the years, Fleitz earned a reputation as Bolton's chief enforcer, a swashbuckler willing to go the extra mile to make the intel fit the desired policy -- even if it meant knocking a few heads. And his dual role (serving what he called his "two bosses") put him in the position to pick up -- and deliver to Bolton -- all kinds of information... including, perhaps, the spousal standing of a certain CIA analyst named Valerie. Even though Plame was in operations and Fleitz was in WINPAC, he obviously was in a position to know.

So when Joe Wilson started making a stink about faulty intel, you can bet that those whose raison d'etre had been spreading faulty intel would move mountains to discredit him. This is a key point because, in the end, Plamegate isn't about the outing of Valerie Plame or the sliming of Joe Wilson. It's about Iraq and the White House's attempt to slam the door on questions about the corrupted intelligence that was used to lead us into a disastrous war. Intel that Fleitz and Bolton played a key

role in shaping.

So what does this all mean to the ongoing Plamegate investigation? Well, another source close to Bolton recently described his management style to me as "Very hands on. Nothing goes by him. His staff does what he wants. He's not the kind of guy to have his staffers freelancing." So, if Fleitz was a key source of the Plame info and Bolton is not the kind of guy to have his staffers freelancing... does this mean Bolton was being less than forthcoming when he told people, in the words of my source, that "the first time he ever heard Valerie Plame's name was when he read it in the newspaper"? Or was he merely sharing talking points with Tim Russert?

So could Ambassador Bolton actually be a target of Pat Fitzgerald's investigation? When considering this question, it's important to keep in mind that he's never been subpoenaed or questioned by the Plamegate grand jury -- and, as a lawyer who does work for the New York Times put it: "The target of a grand jury investigation would not ordinarily be subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury."

So here is what we know: We know that Fleitz was the connection to the CIA, and that Bolton was close to Scooter Libby (and the rest of the neocons, of course) and Judy Miller (for whom he was an important source, although the last time she quoted him by name was in 1999 when he was at the American Enterprise Institute). And here is what we don't know: we don't know the pathway through which Plame's identity got into Novak's column. Did Miller learn about Plame from her old chum Bolton? Did she pass that info on to Libby? Or had Bolton already told Libby? And Rove? Or was it all just passed around and around in a cozy game of neocon phone tag? It makes one wonder more than ever before what Bolton and Miller talked about when he visited her in jail.

Meanwhile the New York Times continues to churn out ever more desperate and illogical "free Judy" editorials. Monday's was a particularly shameful attempt to link the jailing of Miller (who could go free the second she agrees to stop covering for her administration pals -- or her own rear end) to that of Chinese journalist Zhao Yan (who isn't even sure why he's been in jail for the last year, or whether he'll ever be freed or tortured or executed). The Times' pallid disclaimer, "We are not suggesting that the American justice system can be compared to China's," is an additional disgrace, since the entire editorial is based on doing just that. C'mon, guys, if you are going to use specious reasoning, at least don't compound it by being disingenuous too.

Here's a suggestion: before you write another overwrought Judy editorial, how about writing one explaining what happened to the in-house Times investigation into Miller's connection to Plamegate (which sources tell me has been stopped). Or one reporting the fact that Judy is negotiating with Fitzgerald and may be facing criminal contempt charges.

These are stories that deserve some space, don't you think? At least as much as last week's surprisingly upbeat story on John Bolton.

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the stew thickens!

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Why was Miller one of the victims of the anthrax attacks?

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I dunno. A warning to tell her to get in line at the time? She sure did get in line.

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Yes, this could yet get quite interesting. House of cards.

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