

## Wolfowitz Emerges as Key Figure in Intel Manipulation

By Jason Leopold  
t r u t h o u t | Report

Monday 12 February 2007

Paul Wolfowitz, former under secretary of defense, has been identified in recently released grand jury transcripts as being involved in a White House smear campaign against Joseph Wilson, the former US ambassador who accused the Bush administration of manipulating intelligence in the run-up to the Iraq War.

The previously undisclosed development comes on the heels of a scathing report released last week by the Defense Department's Office of the Inspector General that said Wolfowitz played a key role in the cooking of intelligence related to Iraq's ties to al-Qaeda and its supposed cache of chemical and biological weapons. That effort helped the White House lay the groundwork for a US-led invasion.

Taken as a whole, the involvement of Wolfowitz in a full-scale effort to undermine the credibility of an Iraq War critic, and his hands-on role in knowingly providing the White House with the sort of dubious intelligence that came under scrutiny by people like Wilson, shows how widespread the issues surrounding manipulated intelligence truly were, and how crucial it became for senior members of the Bush administration to discredit anyone who threatened to expose their ruse.

The transcripts were released in conjunction with other documents in the perjury and obstruction of justice trial of former vice presidential staffer I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby. They state that Wolfowitz was chosen by Vice President Dick Cheney in mid-July 2003 to leak a highly classified portion of the National Intelligence Estimate to the Wall Street Journal as a way to rebut Wilson's claims that the White House "twisted" intelligence related to Iraq's attempts to build an atomic bomb. The section of the NIE that Wolfowitz leaked to the Journal claimed Wilson's assertions were flat-out wrong. However, it was later revealed that the section of the NIE that Wilson called into question was based on crude forgeries.

The transcript detailing Wolfowitz's involvement in attacks against Wilson's credibility would appear to support similar charges made by career CIA analysts. The analysts told Democratic lawmakers four years ago that they were pressured by Cheney, Libby, Wolfowitz, and former defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld to fix the intelligence on Iraq around the administration's policy toward the country.

In September 2002, according to testimony given Friday by Thomas Gimble, a briefing took place at the White House, attended by National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley, Libby and others purporting a relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda that "was not supported by the available intelligence." Gimble is the acting Defense Department inspector general who prepared the report on pre-war Iraq intelligence,

The meeting took place seven months after Wilson was sent on a fact-finding mission to Niger to investigate whether Iraq had attempted to acquire uranium from the African country. Wilson reported back to the CIA that the allegations were unfounded. But Libby, Cheney, Wolfowitz, President Bush and other senior members of the White House ignored the findings of the intelligence community that said Iraq was not an immediate threat, and they pressured CIA analysts to cherry-pick intelligence that would help lay the groundwork for a US-led invasion, according to the DoD report.

An executive summary of the report, released Friday, stated that Douglas Feith, who headed the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, "was inappropriately performing intelligence activities of developing, producing, and disseminating that should be performed by the intelligence community."

The report concluded that these "inappropriate" activities were authorized by Donald Rumsfeld, former secretary of defense, or Paul Wolfowitz, former deputy secretary of defense.

Furthermore, senior administration officials, including Vice President Cheney, made numerous public statements that reflected the views of the Feith alternative analysis, which were inconsistent with the analysis and judgments of the intelligence community. Indeed, Vice President Cheney said the principal Feith office assessment was the "best source of information" on the alleged relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda.

Those in the intelligence community who dissented found themselves wholly discredited by Libby, Cheney and officials in the Office of the President.

That is exactly what happened to Wilson's wife, covert CIA operative Valerie Plame Wilson, who worked in a division of the CIA that dealt with issues related to weapons of mass destruction. When Wilson went public in July 2003 with his criticism of the administration's use of pre-war intelligence, his wife's identity and undercover status were compromised.

Still, Libby and Cheney continued to hammer away at Wilson, for reasons unknown, days after Plame's name turned up in a newspaper column, and a week after the White House had acknowledged that the intelligence related to Iraq's attempts to acquire uranium from Niger was unreliable.

According to Libby's March 2004 grand jury transcripts, he said that Vice President Cheney discussed with him getting Wolfowitz to contact the Journal to leak the NIE as a way of undermining Wilson.

"After July 14, in that week, the Vice President thought we should still try and get the [NIE] out. And so he asked me to talk to the Wall Street Journal. I don't have as good a relationship with the Wall Street Journal as Secretary Wolfowitz did, and so we talked to Secretary Wolfowitz about trying to get that point across [to the Journal], and he undertook to do so," Libby testified.

Wolfowitz faxed the Wall Street Journal a set of "talking points" about the former ambassador that the paper's editors could use to discredit him in print, according to Libby's grand jury testimony, and then leaked to the paper a portion of the then-still-classified NIE that claimed Iraq did in fact attempt to acquire uranium from Niger. The Journal printed, verbatim, Wolfowitz's talking points in an editorial in its July 17, 2003, edition and then misled its readers about the source of the information.

According to the editorial, "Yellowcake Remix," the Journal said the data the newspaper received about Iraq's interest in uranium "does not

come from the White House," despite the fact that Libby testified that he personally lobbied Wolfowitz to leak the NIE to the Journal, and that arguably Wolfowitz's position as Undersecretary of Defense made him a senior member of the Bush administration.

A spokeswoman for the Wall Street Journal said Saturday she was unfamiliar with the issue and was not interested in responding.