

Anatomy of a Crime: A Timeline of the Wilson-Plame Affair

2001

December: U.S., British, French, and Israeli intelligence services receive reports from the Italian intelligence agency SISMI that Niger government documents show that agents of Saddam Hussein regime sought to purchase tons of yellowcake from the African state.

2002

February: In response to a query from Vice President Dick Cheney about the alleged Niger-Iraq yellowcake deal, the CIA dispatches former Ambassador Joseph Wilson IV to Niger. In the same approximate time frame, the Pentagon dispatches an active-duty Marine General to Niger to probe the same allegations. Both Wilson and the Marine General conclude that the story is untrue.

2003

March 7: International Atomic Energy Agency head Dr. Mohammed ElBaradei testifies before the United Nations Security Council that IAEA inspectors in Iraq have found no evidence of a nuclear weapons program. ElBaradei also reveals publicly, for the first time, that the Niger documents alleging the Iraqi attempts to purchase yellowcake, are shoddy forgeries.

March 8: Joseph Wilson appears on CNN television and says that Bush Administration officials had evidence in their possession, prior to the ElBaradei testimony, showing that the Niger documents were false.

Mid-March: A meeting takes place in the Office of Vice President Dick Cheney, involving senior staff, to discuss the Wilson TV appearance. A background probe is ordered, and subsequently, information against Wilson is shared with neo-conservative members of the Defense Policy Board, according to several U.S. intelligence sources.

July 2: In Lyndon LaRouche's Washington, D.C. international webcast, "A Real President for the USA," he declares, get rid of Cheney for the good of the nation.

July 6: Sunday *New York Times* publishes Joe Wilson op-ed criticizing Bush's remarks on Iraq yellowcake purchase in Niger, for relying on forged documents. He states that the CIA provided this intelligence to the White House prior to Bush's State of the Union Address in January 2003.

July 14: Syndicated columnist Robert Novak publicly "outs" Valerie Plame as a CIA operative, saying: "Wilson never worked for the CIA, but his wife, Valerie Plame, is

an Agency operative on weapons of mass destruction. Two senior Administration officials told me Wilson's wife suggested sending him to Niger to investigate the Italian report."

July 21: Wilson receives a telephone call, about a week after his wife's "outing," from TV talk-show host Chris Matthews of "Hardball," who told Wilson that Karl Rove, President Bush's top political advisor just had told him, "Wilson's wife is fair game."

July 22: *Newsday* is even more specific, saying that Plame "works at the agency [CIA] on weapons of mass destruction issues in an undercover capacity."

July 22: White House spokesman Scott McClellan says there is no truth to the suggestion that someone in the White House leaked the Plame information.

July 24: Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) calls on the FBI to investigate whether a crime has been committed in the Plame leak.

Late July: The CIA files a "crime report" with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) suggesting that the leak of Wilson's wife's name and covert status might entail criminal acts.

Sept. 23: The CIA files papers with DOJ as part of preliminary investigation.

Sept. 26: John Dion, Director of the DOJ's Counterespionage section, decides to pursue a criminal investigation.

Sept. 28: A source in the Administration confirms to the *Washington Post* that two senior Administration officials contacted at least six reporters about the identity and occupation of Wilson's wife. The source claims, "Clearly, it was meant purely and simply for revenge." He stated that he was sharing the information because the disclosure was "wrong and a huge miscalculation, because they were irrelevant and did nothing to diminish Wilson's credibility."

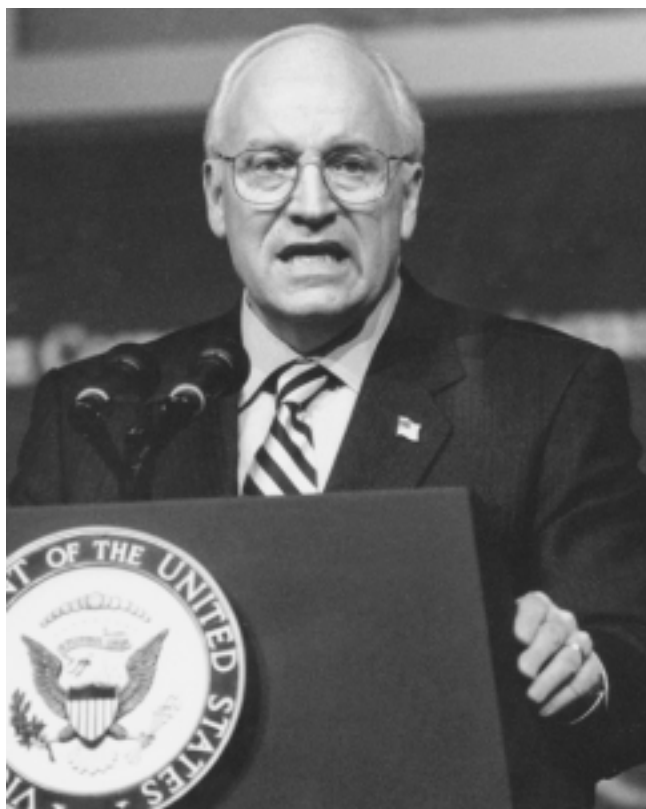
Sept. 29: The *Washington Post* reports that, although President Bush says he will cooperate with the Plame leak probe, "Bush has no plans to ask his staff members whether they played a role."

Sept. 29: At a White House press briefing, Cheney's name is raised three times, forcing White House spokesman Scott McClellan to issue a categorical denial of Cheney's involvement. "There's been nothing, absolutely nothing brought to our attention to suggest any White House involvement, and that includes the Vice President's Office as well," McClellan said.

Sept. 29-30: DOJ notified the White House of its decision to move ahead with full investigation on Monday evening, Sept. 29. Bush was informed Tuesday morning, Sept. 30, by White House General Counsel Alberto Gonzales.

Sept 30: Eleven hours pass between the time that the White House is notified of the investigation and the time that Administration officials asked staff to preserve records.

Oct. 1: Senator Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) says that Bush needs to be proactive: "He has that main responsibility to see this through and see it through quickly, and that would include, if I was President, sitting down with my Vice President and asking what he knows about it"



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Dick Cheney's responsibility in the Plame leak, and in Halliburton's "free pass" to fraud with billions of dollars in Iraq, is now under scrutiny—and could lead to his impeachment.

Oct. 2: Attorney General Ashcroft is under pressure to recuse himself from the investigation because of his ties to Karl Rove. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Penn.) says "recusal is something Ashcroft ought to consider."

Oct. 7: Before an internal investigation is conducted, the White House rules out Karl Rove, Vice Presidential chief of staff Lewis Libby, and National Security Council senior director Elliott Abrams as possible sources for the news leak.

Oct. 8: Bush told reporters that the leaker is not likely to be found, because reporters won't reveal the source. Besides, "this is a large Administration, and there's a lot of senior officials," the U.S. President said.

Oct. 9: Democratic Minority Leader Thomas Daschle (S.D.) and Democratic Senators Joseph Biden, (Del.), Carl Levin (Mich.), and Charles Schumer (N.Y.), send a letter to President George W. Bush pointing to "five missteps" in the investigation of the blown cover of CIA agent Valerie Plame Wilson.

1) Decision of then White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales to screen documents of White House employees submitted in response to the DOJ request, and his possible claim of "Executive Privilege" to withhold some; 2) The DOJ began its investigation on Sept. 26, but did not ask the White House to order employees to preserve relevant evidence until Sept. 29; 3) The DOJ did not ask the Pentagon and State Department

to preserve possible evidence until late on Oct. 1, after news reports that such a request was coming; 4) White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan has said that he determined that three senior officials who were the subject of speculation in news accounts were not involved in leaking classified information, and the Senators believe that this displayed rank incompetence; and, 5) Attorney General Ashcroft remains responsible for the probe, despite his close political and personal relationships with Bush and his top aides.

Dec. 22: Senators Levin and Daschle demand a special prosecutor.

Dec. 30: Attorney General Ashcroft recuses himself from the leak investigation. James Comey, Deputy Attorney General, appoints Patrick Fitzgerald, the U.S. Attorney in Chicago, as "special counsel" to conduct the investigation.

2004

April 1: Fitzgerald is reported to have expanded his probe into the issue of White House officials lying to investigators, and mishandling classified information.

May 21: Fitzgerald is reported to have issued subpoenas to journalists who discussed the matter with the White House between July 6 and 13, including *Time's* Matt Cooper.

June 6: The *Washington Post* reports that representatives of special prosecutor Fitzgerald have interviewed Vice President Dick Cheney.

June 16: White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales testifies before the grand jury.

June 24: President Bush is questioned by Fitzgerald. The interview lasted more than an hour, and a White House spokesman confirmed that the President has retained private counsel.

July 20: Matt Cooper is held in contempt for not responding to Fitzgerald subpoena.

Aug. 12: Fitzgerald subpoenas *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller on her discussions with the White House.

Aug. 13: Former Ambassador Wilson comments on the pending actions against the reporters, saying that the President could easily solve the problem: "The question is, who could get to the bottom of this very quickly? The President of the United States. There has to be an internal investigation into who's betraying the country—an investigation with sworn affidavits from everybody on his staff—and the President ought to insist everybody who talked to any reporter about this subject sign a waiver."

Oct. 16: Karl Rove testifies before grand jury.

2005

Feb. 15: D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals upholds contempt ruling against Cooper and Miller.

July 6: *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller goes to jail, whereas Cooper agrees to testify, after receiving a call and a waiver from his White House source.

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