

It Was Cheney Behind Iraq Disinformation

by Michele Steinberg

The manipulation of the intelligence given to the U.S. Congress and the American population to get the war in Iraq, could be summed up with three words, “The Vice President,” stated Col. Lawrence Wilkerson (ret.), to a packed hearing room at the U.S. Senate on June 26. As Wilkerson made the statement, in response to a question from Republican Congressman Walter Jones of North Carolina, total silence fell over the hearing room, broken only by Representative Jones’ next question to a panel of former Bush-Cheney Administration officials.

Wilkerson, who left the State Department in January 2006, almost three years after the Iraq War began, had been the Chief of Staff to Colin Powell for 16 years, including all four years while Powell was Secretary of State, and was testifying to a hearing sponsored by the Senate Democratic Policy Committee, chaired by Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) (<http://democrats.senate.gov>).

In the public interest, *EIR* provides below, a key excerpt of the written testimony submitted by Wilkerson, which focusses on one of the most important moments in the run-up to the Iraq War—the testimony by Powell to the UN Security Council.

Overall, the hearing, entitled “An Oversight Hearing on Pre-War Intelligence Relating to Iraq,” was an institutional indictment of the Bush Administration, with Cheney’s office at the center of it. It was the hearing that rightfully should have already occurred before the Senate Judiciary Committee, and not just before the Senate Democrats. But, it was notable that Representative Jones, one of the co-sponsors along with Ron Paul (R-Tex.), Neil Abercrombie (D-Hi.), and Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), of the bipartisan bill in the House to withdraw troops from Iraq, had asked—and had been welcomed—to participate.

The witnesses were Wilkerson; Paul Pillar, former National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia; Carl Ford, former Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research (INR); Wayne White, former Deputy Director, Office of Analysis for the Near East and South Asia, State Department, INR. A second panel featured other experts on the Iraq situation: Rod Barton, former Senior Advisor to the Iraq Survey Group, who testified on the search for the non-existent WMDs; Michael Smith, defense correspondent, *Sunday Times* of London, who testified on the “Downing Street

Memo,” whereby Bush and Blair met in April 2002, and discussed the war against Iraq as an already-decided policy; and Joseph Cirincione, senior vice president, Center for American Progress, who had been a co-author of a study for the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, which concluded that there *were no WMD* in Iraq—long before the Administration admitted it.

Wilkerson’s testimony was a meticulous and very valuable elaboration of the statements that he had made in previous interviews about the hoked-up dossier that was prepared by Cheney’s office for the UN—but this hearing took place on the premises of the U.S. Senate.

In a conversation with members of the LaRouche Youth Movement after the hearing, Wilkerson responded to their question, “When did you realize that Cheney was the center of this?” He said he realized the extent of the problem when Cheney was actively sabotaging Powell’s efforts to reach a diplomatic solution to the Iraq WMD question, especially when Cheney gave the infamous “Iraq nuclear threat” speech to the 103rd gathering of the VFW (in August 2002). He also said that he had learned that Cheney had an intelligence unit in his office that outranked other intelligence agencies.

Who Gave the Neo-Cons the Power?

But it was Representative Jones who asked the \$64,000 question: Who gave the neo-conservatives the power to overpower all the intelligence professionals?

Jones gave what attendees described as the most passionate speech they had seen about the misinformation given to Congress about the Iraq War, stating:

“I have actually met with Mr. Pillar, Mr. Wilkerson and eight other individuals, from General Zinni, to [General] Battiste, to General Neubold, to Karen Kwiatkowski, to Sam Gardner, to James Bamford. These men know that my heart has ached ever since I found out that maybe the intelligence that we were given [in] the House to vote for the resolution was flawed, and possibly manipulated.

“I’ve taken it on myself, to write every family in America” that lost a soldier in Iraq, he continued. “And when you count the extended families, I have sent over 8,000 letters. I say that to you and this distinguished group, because my heart has ached ever since I have questioned whether my vote was justified based on fact. . . .

“What has troubled me so greatly is. . . . I will make reference very briefly to General Neubold, who I’ve met with, and he wrote an article for *Time* magazine in April of 2006 which says why Iraq was a mistake. And this was not co-authored, this was in his name, Lt. Gen. Greg Neubold, who actually gave up a third star—he was a two-star Marine general, and he gave up a third star, because he could not longer stay at the Department of Defense. He was part of J-3. . . .

“And I think, the American people quite frankly, are perplexed, and Colonel Wilkerson, since you identified yourself . . . as a Republican, I will go to you first. How did the 4-5 neo-conservatives who were put into policy positions in the Department of Defense, how were they able to take credible,

or at least the best information, and somewhat, it seems like—correct me if I’m wrong—it seems like they rewrote the intelligence. And, I guess my point is, since you were there with Secretary Powell, in meetings at the time. I don’t know *how*, unless someone wanted them to have that authority, that they themselves could have so much influence, and the history of these individuals is that they tried to get President Clinton to go into Iraq. . . .

“My question is this, to all four of you who would like to answer, maybe it’s a very simple question. I apologize if its been asked before. But what perplexes me is how in the world could professionals—I’m not criticizing anybody here at this table—but how could the professionals see what was happening and nobody speak out?

“So where along the way how did these people so early on get so much power that they had more influence than those in the Administration to make decisions than you the professionals. . . ?”

Wilkerson replied, “As a Republican, I’m somewhat embarrassed by the fact that you’re the only member of my party here. But I understand it. I’d answer you with two words. . . . Let me put the article in there and make it three. The Vice President.”