

# THE TOWNSEND CAMPAIGN

*Summary: In this post, I argue that Murray Waas' latest argument is not, as some suspect, a rehashed Rove leak. Rather, it comes very close to asserting that Libby had leaked a different smear story to Bob Novak at about the time of the Wilson leak. This suggests, I argue, that it is very likely that Novak's first leak came from OVP, if not from Libby himself.*

Well, Typepad's long downtime today has prevented me from commenting on the new Waas piece in a timely manner. But it means I get to comment on it with the benefit of reading others' opinions on the piece. I've got to say though, I disagree with the opinion of many that this is a story floated by the Rove camp to try to exonerate him. Rather than pointing toward a Rove excuse, I think Waas almost—but not quite—has a story sewn up that points very clearly at OVP. The degree to which this exonerates Rove is just secondary. Indeed, I think Waas' article clearly suggests that the remaining mysteries all point to Cheney's office.

Waas spends a good deal of time explaining that Novak called Rove on July 9 to talk about Frances Fragos Townsend, not to talk about Plame.

Instead, the voluminous material on Rove's desk – including talkingpoints, related briefing materials, and information culled from confidential government personnel files – involved a different woman: **Frances Fragos Townsend**, a former senior attorney in the Clinton administration's Justice Department whom **President Bush** had recently named to be his deputy national security adviser for combating terrorism.

Bush had personally assigned Rove to help counter what the president believed to be a "rearguard" effort within his own administration, by persons unknown, to discredit Townsend and derail her appointment, according to White House documents and accounts given by former and current officials.