

# THE WHITE HOUSE BUNKERS DOWN

Back in September, I was one of the first to notice that Cheney had left Bush to his own devices in responding to New Orleans. At the time, I suspected Cheney might be trying to demonstrate how much Bush relies on Cheney when he needs to **execute** something effectively, rather than just spin it. And I have long suggested that the impending Plame indictments might be taxing White House loyalties.

Since then, new evidence has leaked that OVP and Bush's aides have indeed had serious conflicts. Stories allege that Bush is lashing out at everyone in the White House, that the First Mother is planning to pull a "Nancy Reagan" and get rid of Dick Cheney, that Bush had left Cheney out of key decisions.

But in the last week, that seems to have changed. Last week, Bush reiterated his support for both Cheney...

"The truth of the matter is that our relationship hasn't changed hardly at all," Bush said. "I'd say the relationship — it's only gotten better. We didn't know each other that well when we first came to Washington, D.C., and my respect for him has grown immensely."

...and Rove...

"We're still as close as we've ever been," Bush said. "You know, when we look back at the presidency and my time in politics, no question that Karl had a lot to do with me getting here, and I value his friendship. We're very close."

And rumors are apparently flying that Cheney is back in the driver's seat of the Administration (one big question on this account is who won the

torture war—McCain, for preventing a CIA exception, or Dick, for finding a way to allow torture via a classified addendum to the Army Manual guidelines on interrogation). The revelations about the NSA spying seem to have further cemented Cheney's resurgent control of this Administration.