

CHENEY PLAYS DUMB

As a teaser for the post I keep promising, but never delivering (identifying the document from which I think Cheney learned of Plame's identity), I'm going to make a quick point about Cheney's request to the CIA on June 10, 2003 for information on Wilson's trip. This email, written by Robert Grenier's Executive Assistant (but not seen by Grenier, if we can believe his trial testimony), repeats the story that Cheney gave to John McLaughlin to verify. Here's the story:

In February 2002, CIA received an initial report of a shipment of uranium from Niger to Chad. Former Ambassador to Cameroon Joe Wilson (an old friend of the Agency and former Charge d'Affaires in Baghdad) was supposedly sent by CIA to Niger to investigate this story. He did so, and he concluded that there was no truth to it. Wilson said that he was debriefed by a CIA case officer who flew in (to where is unclear) [redacted]

Now, I presume that the parenthetical information about Wilson—"an old friend of the Agency and former Charge d'Affaires in Baghdad"—comes from the author of this email or McLaughlin. But I presume the rest comes from Cheney—it's the story that he told McLaughlin he had heard, and would like verified or refuted.

Notice the false details in the story? Joe Wilson was never Ambassador to Cameroon—he was Ambassador to Gabon and Sao Tome (and I've asked him—he was never otherwise stationed in Cameroon). And the February 2002 report, if it included any information about a shipment of uranium from Niger to Iraq, described that shipment as going through Benin, not Chad. The report described a contract being signed, not a shipment. The bit about the debriefing is weird too, with the ambiguity about where the

debriefing took place. Cheney told McLaughlin a story that would lead him to find the real story on Wilson (the 2002 intelligence, the reference to Niger, and Wilson's name should do that by itself), but that included some noise, some incorrect information.