

STEPHEN HAYES TELLS THE TRUTHINESS: “THERE WOULDN’T HAVE BEEN AN INVESTIGATION”

Perhaps the most amusing aspect of Hayes' retelling of the Plame story in his biography on Cheney is his description of the events of fall 2003.

Before I explain it, I should note that Hayes has a problem with time. He frequently alters the chronology of events so he can screw with the causality. For example, he depicts Tenet's July 11 statement—released at the end of the day in DC—as occurring before Condi's earlier statement on Air Force One pretty much forcing Tenet's hand to take the fall. I presume he does this to minimize the viciousness of Condi's attack on Tenet—or some such thing.

Something similar happens with Hayes' depiction of the announcement of the investigation. Hayes—and therefore I presume Cheney—claims the investigation would never have happened if it weren't for Andrea Mitchell's story on the investigation on September 26, 2003.

Then, on September 26, 2003, Andrea Mitchell of NBC News and Alex Johnson of MSNBC broke a big story on the MSNBC Web site. "The CIA has asked the Justice Department to investigate allegations that the White House broke federal laws by revealing the identity of one of its undercover employees in retaliation against the woman's husband, a former ambassador who publicly criticized President Bush's since-discredited claims that Iraq had sought weapons-grade uranium from Africa, NBC News has learned.

The same day, the Justice Department ordered the FBI to begin an investigation into the leak.

[snip]

White House officials and those close to Cheney believe that the referral was made public as a result of a deliberate leak from the CIA, part of the broader war between the CIA and the Bush Administration. It embarrassed the White House and put pressure on the Justice Department to appoint a special prosecutor.

See the weird timing claimed in this narrative? The CIA request was first submitted in July; then again on September 5. The CIA more formally requested an investigation on September 16. Had the CIA wanted to leak to increase the pressure for an investigation, that leak would have occurred around September 5, or September 16 at the latest. But Hayes (and Cheney) are arguing that a CIA leak on September 26 forced the issue of the investigation, which started on September 26.

Moreover, Mitchell reported this on Friday night. Yet even Hayes agrees that the investigation started on the 26. So how did Mitchell's article affect the decision that occurred, presumably, before close of business on the 26?

The story is more interesting for what it says about the paranoia within OVP than for its truthiness value. It suggests Cheney believed everything was taken care of—there would be no investigation. And then when whatever plan he had to prevent an investigation failed, he had to blame it once again on his paranoid perceptions about the CIA, rather than the merit of the case.