

# IS DICK PLAYING GAMES WITH PAKISTAN'S ELECTION?

McClatchy is off to a running start in the new year—reporting that Benazir Bhutto was about to hand over to Arlen Specter and Patrick Kennedy evidence of an ISI plan to steal ~~this~~ next month's election in Pakistan.

The day she was assassinated last Thursday, Benazir Bhutto had planned to reveal new evidence alleging the involvement of Pakistan's intelligence agencies in rigging the country's upcoming elections, an aide said Monday.

Bhutto had been due to meet U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., and Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., to hand over a report charging that the military Inter-Services Intelligence agency was planning to fix the polls in the favor of President Pervez Musharraf.

Safraz Khan Lashari, a member of the Pakistan People's Party election monitoring unit, said the report was "very sensitive" and that **the party wanted to initially share it with trusted American politicians rather than the Bush administration, which is seen here as strongly backing Musharraf.** [my emphasis]

Given Bhutto's apparent worries about handing over evidence to the Bush Administration, I couldn't help but think of this story.

Current and past U.S. officials tell me that Pakistan policy is essentially being run from Cheney's office. The vice president, they say, is close to Musharraf and refuses to brook any U.S. criticism of him. This all fits; in

recent months, I'm told, Pakistani opposition politicians visiting Washington have been ushered in to meet Cheney's aides, rather than taken to the State Department.

And then add in this bit from McClatchy, that Pakistan was using aid money for its plans to steal the election.

Lashari said the report claimed that U.S. aid money was being used to fix the elections. Ballots stamped in favor of the Pakistan Muslim League-Q, which supports Musharraf, were to be produced by the intelligence agencies in about 100 parliamentary constituencies.

"They diverted money from aid activities. We had evidence of where they were spending the money," Lashari said.

And then finally, this bit from Spencer Ackerman.

In fact, however, a considerable amount of the money the U.S. gives to Pakistan is administered not through U.S. agencies or joint U.S.-Pakistani programs. Instead, the U.S. gives Musharraf's government about \$200 million annually and his military \$100 million *monthly* in the form of direct cash transfers. Once that money leaves the U.S. Treasury, Musharraf can do with it whatever he wants. He needs only promise in a secret annual meeting that he'll use it to invest in the Pakistani people. And whatever happens as the result of Rice's review, few Pakistan watchers expect the cash transfers to end.

It would all be so tidy if it didn't mean the guys who hit us on 9/11 get closer to owning

Pakistan's nukes with each step Dick makes.