

# FITZ V. ROVE, PART VI

The suggestion that Bob Kjellander was working with Rove to have Fitz fired is not new.

In a hearing before court began, prosecutors said they hoped to call Ali Ata, the former Blagojevich administration official who pleaded guilty to corruption yesterday, to the stand.

Assistant U.S. Atty. Carrie Hamilton said she believed Ata would testify to conversations Ata had with his political patron, Rezko, about working to pull strings to kill the criminal investigation into Rezko and others when it was in its early stages in 2004.

"[Ata] had conversations with Mr. Rezko about the fact that Mr. Kjellander was working with Karl Rove to have Mr. Fitzgerald removed," Hamilton told U.S. District Judge Amy St. Eve.

Back in the days when there was question whether Fitzgerald would be ousted in 2006 (before the USA purge broke), Chicago commentators regularly noted how badly Chicago pols—and Kjellander in particular—wanted to see Fitzgerald gone.

And there's good reason to think he might be [fired], aside from the president's non-assurance. One of the chief practitioners of Illinois establishment politics is Republican operative Bob Kjellander, who brags (whether true or not) about his friendship with Bush chief political strategist, Karl Rove. Despite Kjellander's engineering Bush defeats in Illinois and other Midwest states, the White House (Rove?) thought he was pretty hot stuff and brought him to the Beltway where he is engineering who

knows what political disaster.

Kjellander also will be credited with the coming GOP election disaster in Illinois, thanks to his help in selecting state Treasurer Judy Barr Topinka to run against incumbent Blagojevich. She's a dear lady, a treasured "moderate," but not a gusty independent willing to stand up to the political establishment.

**The point is that Kjellander (pronounced Shelander), a Republican national committeeman who has received \$800,000 in unexplained fees through a state bond-borrowing deal engineered by Democrat Blagojevich, is no fan of Fitzgerald's either.** No one, in other words, in the political establishment in Chicago or Washington, is pushing for Fitzgerald's reappointment. [my emphasis]

And after news broke last year that Fitzgerald had been on the firing list, at least one Chicago commentator predicted that Kjellander was the reason, and not the Plame case. (This is a March 21 Chicago Trib article by John Kass behind the firewall, but here's a blog post that cites most of it.)

How many conversations did Karl Rove—the political Rasputin of the Bush White House—have with top Illinois Republicans about U.S. Atty. Patrick Fitzgerald?

Ten? Fifty? None?

Did Rove speak directly to Big Bob Kjellander, whom Rove engineered into the job of treasurer of the Republican National Committee?

Answers might tell us why Fitzgerald, honored in 2002 as one of the top prosecutors in the Justice Department—and the fed most feared by

the bipartisan political Combine that runs Illinois—was abruptly downgraded in March 2005.

[snip]

Conventional wisdom from Washington is that Fitzgerald fell out of favor with the Republicans because of his pursuit of the CIA leak case, which led to the recent perjury conviction of Lewis "Scooter" Libby, former chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney.

But why not consider an alternative?

Just as that March 2005 memo downgrading Fitzgerald was making its way to the White House, Fitzgerald's office in Chicago was proceeding in a fascinating political corruption probe involving alleged kickbacks requiring state approval for the construction of hospitals.

That case would mushroom into Operation Board Games, revealing bipartisan political influence in hundreds of millions of dollars invested through state pension funds.

There have been so many distractions that you're bound to have forgotten about Operation Board Games. The distractions include City Hall's Olympic dreams that won't cost taxpayers a dime and whether Lord Conrad Black's wife thinks reporters covering her husband's federal fraud trial are a bunch of vermin and sluts. With all this talk of Olympics and sluts and so on, you probably haven't had time to figure the Fitzgerald timeline.

But as that 2005 memo was sent to the White House, Fitzgerald was formally unmasking the Combine in what would later become Operation Board Games.

[snip]

One fellow in the federal documents of the Operation Board Games case was listed as "Individual K." And his buddy appeared several times in those same documents as "Individual A," for Alpha.

Individuals A and K have not been indicted. But the Tribune identified them as Big Bob Kjellander (pronounced \$hell-ander) and his buddy, Big Bill Cellini, the political boss of Springfield.

Kjellander is the Republican committeeman of Illinois who flaunts his friendship with Rove and who recently resigned as treasurer of the Republican National Committee. Kjellander also represented the famous Carlyle Group before the teachers' pension fund board and he received \$4.5 million in questionable consulting fees.

Did Kjellander discuss Fitzgerald with Rove? I don't know.

In other words, knowledgeable observers at least suspected—as Fitzgerald's presence on the firing list came to light last year—that Kjellander, and not Rove in Plame, was the cause. (Me, I think both might have been the reason Fitzgerald made the firing list; far be it for Rove to be choosy about his reasons to fire a USA.)

Since the suggestion is not new, I'm not so much surprised by the announcement as I'm interested in the way the USA NDIL introduced this evidence and the implications it has for the whole investigation of politicized prosecutions.

You see, I believe—based on somewhat attentive observation of Patrick Fitzgerald over time—that introducing this kind of evidence is one of his favorite MOs. He introduces information that **pertains** to a case but is actually much more valuable for the way it points to much graver

criminal issues that Fitzgerald is not in a position to address at a given moment. Thus, Fitzgerald introduced a great deal of evidence to show that Dick Cheney had, indeed, ordered Scooter Libby to leak Valerie Wilson's identity. Because of constitutional reasons and pixie dust reasons and the inadequacy of Judy Judy Judy's recall, he was not able to indict either Libby or Cheney on IIPA. But he got the evidence out there that that is, indeed, what happened. Unfortunately, Congress and the press were too busy trying to get Fitzgerald to release grand jury information that they failed to look closely at the information already in the public domain, and the information was never used to good effect.

I suspect that Fitzgerald has figured out the limits of Congress and the Press, because this time he has made it a bit easier. Golly, the press actually even reported on a non-trial conference, something that rarely happened in the Libby trial.

Fitzgerald's office (though not Fitzgerald personally) has just said to John Conyers, "Hey, I see you're still looking into politicized prosecutions. Well, here's a witness who can testify that a Rove crony was working with Rove to get Fitzgerald fired—just before Fitzgerald almost got fired." This adds another witness—like Dana Jill Simpson—who is willing to testify that Rove got personally involved in prosecutions affecting his political allies. But it also brings someone from the requesting side to the fore—someone who (unlike the GOP cronies in Washington who got John McKay fired and unlike the GOP cronies in NM who got Iglesias fired) is apparently willing (and presumably has already signed an affidavit to the effect) to testify that Karl Rove entertained these demands for firing seriously. Conyers will, undoubtedly, take a few days to respond (he's not so quick as Henry Waxman), but I imagine he will respond.

This will make it much easier demonstrate the criminal behavior needed to successfully

subpoena Karl Rove to testify about this case, about Siegelman, and about Iglesias. It is, presumably, someone who is willing to go on the record to say that Karl Rove willingly intervened to fire a USA with the clear intent of stopping an investigation in one of Rove's allies.

Notice that Rove's lawyer Robert Luskin was very quick to issue a very insistent denial.

But Robert Luskin, Rove's attorney, today issued an unequivocal statement about all of this to the Tribune on behalf of Rove, former deputy chief of staff to President Bush, architect of Bush's presidential campaigns and a private consultant in Washington now.

"Karl has known Kjellander for many years," Luskin said, "but does not recall him or anyone else arguing for Fitzgerald's removal. And he (Rove) is very certain that he didn't take any steps to do that, or have any conversations with anyone in the White House – or in the Justice Department – about doing anything like that."

Ha ha! Gold Bars! You thought you had beaten Fitzgerald once and for all, didn't you? Ha. Ha!

Of course, there's one more witness to this issue: Kyle Sampson. Now, even in HJC's preliminary report on the USA firings, there was clear evidence that cliquemembers at DOJ conspired to cover up the real reasons behind the firing of David Iglesias. As Glenn Fine reportedly draws near to finishing his investigation into the matter, those who participated in that cover-up may be getting antsy about their own role in the cover-up. I don't know whether such antsiness will or has made Kyle Sampson recall in more detail how or why he suggested Patrick Fitzgerald be fired. But I would imagine there is about to be a whole lot more pressure for him to remember those

details.