

WHY DID HARRIET KNOW OF ROVE'S INVOLVEMENT?

I didn't finish Scottie McC's book on the plane. Barely started it, actually. Suffice it to say I had an interesting chat, instead.

But I did manage to scan the thing closely enough to have a lot of questions—and here's one I'd like to throw out at the lawyerly types in the crowd.

Why would Harriet know—in July 2005—of Rove's involvement in the leak? Scottie McC describes Harriet warning him (though Scottie already knew a lot of it) that something was going to break just before Rove's involvement in the leaks to Novak and Cooper became known.

Later that morning [July 10, 2005], Harriet Miers, a longtime Bush loyalist from Texas who had taken over as White House counsel when Al Gonzales was confirmed as attorney general, called me through the White House operator. Like me, Harriet had served in the Bush White House since day one. The West Wing was quiet that day. I had come in to catch up on work, watch some of the Sunday political shows that were taped, and prepare for the week ahead free from interruption.

Harriet was calling from her office and said she needed to come and talk to me about something important. She walked in, closed the door behind her, and said, "There's some news that's likely to come out tomorrow about Karl in the leak investigation that may appear to contradict what you said nearly two years ago."

"I heard," I said, thinking about Isikoff's report but not taking time to

let what she had said fully sink in. Harriet reiterated to me that we still could not comment on the investigation publicly. In effect, she was forbidding me from talking and setting the record straight about my previous comments.

Now perhaps the answer is very simple: perhaps Isikoff called for comment before he published his article. Perhaps Isikoff even called Harriet and read her the email from Cooper to his editor, in its entirety, that proved Rove was lying about his claims not to have said anything about Plame to Cooper. He had done the same favor—in guise of getting comment—for Luskin.

But why call Harriet, instead of, say, Rove or Scottie McC? (Well, okay, I'll assume he may have called Rove, but he did not call Scottie first.) (Come to think of it, maybe Luskin just called Harriet as a courtesy.)

Now, as Scottie McC said, Harriet was, at that point, White House Counsel. And earlier in the investigation, Gonzales had reviewed all the evidence before it was turned over to the FBI. So it's conceivable that Harriet was doing the same. But what evidence would have been turned over in this time period? The Rove-Hadley email? That would not, by itself, reveal the depths of Rove's involvement.

Or did Rove warn Harriet, effectively telling her the White House was about to have an obstruction problem on its hands? Mind you, that wouldn't be entirely proper or safe. After all, Rove would not have attorney-client privilege with Harriet.

Finally, I love the fact that Harriet reminded Scottie McC not to say anything. Because, of course, the only thing he could say was "well, the President told me Rove didn't say anything, and he told me so himself."

I can understand why Harriet wouldn't want folks to know the details of Bush's involvement in Rove's denials.