

SCOTTIE MCC'S CHRONOLOGY: OCTOBER 4

I told you I was going to get into the guts of Scottie McC's book. So far, I've shown that:

- Scottie McC hides the date when the White House learned of an investigation and ignores details that seemed to implicate Rove, thereby making Karl's interventions look less suspicious
- Scottie McC falsely suggests Bush's comments on Rove weren't a reaction to the 1X2X6 story
- Someone appears to have told Condi to exonerate Rove—and Scottie McC doesn't think he was the one who did so
- While Scottie McC's representation of what he briefed on September 29 is mostly accurate, there are a few details that he still appears to be hiding, notably his refusal to say that Rove didn't know of Plame's identity, even though Rove had just said as much to him

All of this suggests that there were big reasons to doubt Rove's claims that he wasn't involved. And, given Scottie McC's refusal to state that Rove didn't know about Valerie Wilson's identity

when he spoke with Novak, it seems likely Scottie McC may have doubted those claims more than he lets on in his book.

So let's turn to his treatment of Libby.

For some understandable narrative reasons, Scottie McC interrupts his treatment of the events of fall 2003 right in the middle. He ends chapter 10 with his September 29 mid-day briefing and then takes a full chapter to discuss events relating to Iraq leading all the way up to fall 2004. Then, in chapter 12, he returns to the CIA leak investigation, starting with DOJ's notification on the evening of September 29 that it would conduct an investigation.

I understand the narrative logic behind such a split, with chapter 10 treating the pre-investigation events and chapter 12 treating the investigation events. But the effect is to heighten the false impression that the White House did not know of the investigation during the earlier events. It also creates an equally false impression that Scottie McC operated by different rules during the events that appear in chapter 10 and those that appear in chapter 12.

This has a dramatic effect in his treatment of his refusal to exonerate Scooter Libby.

Scottie pretends that he was first asked about Libby's involvement on October 1—the morning after the White House's employees (as distinct from Alberto Gonzales) received official notice of the investigation.

The next morning's gaggle back at the White House signaled that the press was now turning toward a new rumored suspect in the leak, the vice president's chief of staff—Scooter Libby.

Here's how it started. Just as I was ending the gaggle, John Roberts, CBS News chief White House correspondent, said, "One more question. You said the other day, emphatically, that you had

received assurances from Karl Rove that he had nothing to do with this. Have you since then received similar assurances from the vice president's chief of staff?"

"John, I'm not going to go down—I made this clear the other day—I'm not going to go down a list of every single member of the staff in the White House," I said, as I started moving away from the podium.

..."now turning to a new rumored suspect" ...

"Here's how it started" ... Scottie McC goes to some length to suggest that this question—on October 1—was the first he received about Scooter Libby.

But that's not true—as Scottie McC's own reference to the earlier briefing makes clear.

When Scottie McC said, "I made this clear the other day," he appears to be referring to this exchange during the September 29 press briefing:

Q But I'm not asking what you said, I'm asking if the President has a factual basis for saying — for your statement that he knows Karl Rove —

MR. McCLELLAN: He's aware of what I've said, that there is simply no truth to that suggestion. And I have spoken with Karl about it.

Q Does he know whether or not the Vice President's Chief of Staff, Lewis Libby —

MR. McCLELLAN: If you have any specific information to bring to my attention — like I said, there has been nothing that's been brought to our attention. You asked me earlier if we were looking into it, there is nothing that's been brought to our attention beyond the media reports. But if someone did

something like this, it needs to be looked at by the Department of Justice, they're the appropriate agency charged with looking into matters like this –

A question Scottie McC refused to answer.

In fact, in addition to that question, Scottie was asked about Libby's (and Dick's) involvement twice more in that September 29 briefing.

Q You are also saying that, you know, for your knowledge, including the Vice President' Office, no one divulged this kind of information. But with this assuredness, why do you think the husband came out and pointed fingers and said this?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry, why what?

[snip]

Q Do your words also speak for Vice President Cheney? And can you categorically say that he was not involved in this?

MR. McCLELLAN: I've made it clear that there's been nothing, absolutely nothing, brought to our attention to suggest any White House involvement, and that includes the Vice President's office, as well. When I'm talking about the White House, I'm talking about the Vice President's office as well.

So it is clearly false to suggest that the press corps was "turning to a new rumored suspect" on October 1. They already considered Libby, along with Rove, a suspect on September 29, the first briefing after the 1X2X6 article.

Curiously, the suggestion that the press corps didn't start asking about Libby until after the investigation officially started gives Scottie McC a neat explanation for why he didn't exonerate Libby immediately. He describes the

following exchange as having occurred on October 1, after the gaggle.

As I entered the Oval staff area, I ran into Scooter Libby. He frequently represented the vice president in world leader meetings when Cheney did not attend, and we often sat next to each other. Since we were both early, I asked if I could talk to him for a minute. We both stepped back into the small entryway connecting the Oval support staff area with the waiting area in the hallway.

"You need to know," I said, "the press is starting to ask more questions about you and whether you might have leaked Plame's name."

Scooter listened carefully. "I told them that I was not going to go down a list of White House staff and answer whether every staffer was involved in the leak," I continued. "I want you to know why. Now that there's an investigation under way, I can't put myself in that position. I want you to know I'm not trying to leave you hanging out there to dry."

Uh huh. Scottie McC describes himself telling Libby **after** the investigation formally began why he did not exonerate Libby—and he attributes it to the investigation. But that doesn't explain why Scottie McC refused to say that Libby (and Dick) were not involved in the leak on September 29, at the time when the White House was pretending the investigation had not yet begun.

So here's how Scottie McC—after some apparent reluctance to exonerate Libby and Dick—came to exonerate Libby publicly. Some of this is important new information contributing to the evidence that Libby and Dick went to Jackson, WY and worked up a cover story.

That Saturday, October 4, was a relaxed, casual morning for me as I lounged around my single-bedroom, downtown apartment reading the Washington Post and the New York Times.

[snip]

The call came from Andy Card around 8:30 A.M. "The president and vice president spoke this morning. They want you to give the press the same assurance for Scooter that you gave for Karl."

I am not a coffee drinker. I drink diet Coke for my morning caffeine fix. I was still sipping on one, but what Andy just said jolted me more than the soft drink did.

"Okay," I said, not really indicating my instinctive disinclination to do what he was directing me to do.

Let me interrupt to remind you that Andy Card was the guy signaling to Bush to shut up about Rove's involvement in the leak on September 29, before the leak had officially begun. Yet here he was, after the White House received official notification of the investigation, hauling Scottie McC's ass into work on a Sunday so he could call the press and tell them Libby wasn't involved. If I'm not mistaken, Andy Card hasn't yet come out to condemn Scottie McC—I wonder whether he'd be willing to explain how reluctant he was to force Scottie McC to exonerate Libby?

Anyway, back to Scottie McC, who explains again why he didn't want to exonerate Libby.

Based on Andy's comments, it was clear to me Scooter had enlisted the vice president to personally appeal to the president to have me publicly deny his involvement. Now that the investigation was fully under way, I didn't like the idea of signaling out staff members to defend. Earlier in the week, I had

spoken with Al [Gonzales] and David [Leitch, the Deputy WHCO], who'd advised me pretty strongly against commenting any further on matters pertaining to the investigation, including the names of individuals. I had already told the press I would not do it. And I knew if I opened the door for one, it would be virtually impossible to close it if other names started to surface. And the press would be curious why I'd asked Scooter about his involvement, and why the White House wasn't asking every staff member the question.

What Scottie McC doesn't admit—because he has spent so much effort trying to hide this fact earlier—is that it was widely suspected (and, at least in the case of Rove, presumably backed up by the SAO who sourced Mike Allen's piece) that Rove and Libby were the "2" in 1X2X6.

 Scottie McC makes clear, as he continues, that this was an order from Bush and Cheney.

But this was an order from on high. As a result, I was about to cross the line I'd drawn publicly once the investigation had gotten under way earlier in the week.

[snip]

I knew from Andy's terse comments on the phone that what he was saying was not really up for debate, nor did I expect him to offer any additional information about the president's telephone discussion with the vice president.

To this day, I do not know what the two discussed.

This is perhaps the appropriate time to recall that when Cheney wrote a note to support the exoneration of Libby, he wrote,

Has to happen today

Call out to key press saying same thing about Scooter as Karl

Not going to protect one staffer + sacrifice the guy the Pres that was asked to stick his neck in the meat grinder because of the incompetence of others –

In other words, since Cheney wrote a note saying "has to happen today," and what he wanted to happen did happen on that day (I'll return to this, but Scottie McC records calling Newsweek, NYT, Mike Allen from WaPo, and the AP), it's safe to say that the note reflects some of what Cheney said to Bush. "The pres [asked Libby] to stick his neck in a meat-grinder." You think perhaps Cheney raised the fact that he believed that Bush was the one who asked Libby to step up and take this on?

But Scottie McC—who is still protecting Bush—doesn't see it that way.

I am confident from knowing the president and from our previous conversations that he did not have any knowledge about Libby, Rove, or anyone else involved in disclosing Plame's identity to reporters. President Bush would not have deliberately misled me.

There's a lot to say about this—beyond raising the meat grinder note or the fact that Libby recorded involvement from Bush on the day the OVP started its intensified campaign against the Wilsons. But I'll leave it for a separate post.

While Scottie wants to protect Bush, he's ready to throw Cheney over the side.

While I wish I could say the same about the vice president, I simply don't know for sure. Information that would become public in future legal proceedings would raise questions about the vice

president's actions that he has never publicly addressed.

I expect John Conyers may want to pursue this on June 20.

I'll end this post with a description of the conversation between Scottie McC and Libby that resulted in Scottie McC's exoneration of Libby.

I told Andy I would make the same public statement about Scooter as I had for Karl, provided I received the same assurance from Scooter. Andy asked what statement I had given about Karl, and I told him I had said he was neither involved in leaking Plame's identity, nor did he condone it. I told Andy that once I'd spoken with Scooter, I would call a few reporters to make sure it got out.

When I got back to my office, I called a White House operator to track down Scooter. As he often did, he was traveling with Cheney, who was spending the weekend at his place in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Oops. One last interjection. With this comment, Scottie McC makes clear that Libby and Cheney were in Jackson when they plotted Libby's exoneration. Think of the timing that implies. Andy Card called Scottie McC at 8:30 AM. That suggests that either Cheney spoke to Bush before 6:30 his time (MST) to get him to exonerate Libby. Or he spoke to Bush about it the evening before, and Bush passed it on to Andy Card in a morning conversation. And I find it highly interesting that, not only did Libby tell Cheney he was going to claim he learned of Plame's ID from Tim Russert, but they also plotted his exoneration while they were in Jackson together.

To finish:

The conversation was short. Scooter was

never one for many words. [Except for that two hour meeting with Judy Judy Judy, I guess.] He knew why I was calling since he had instigateded what I was being instructed to do. "Were you involved in the leak in any way?" I asked him.

"No, absolutely not," Scooter replied.

"All right," I said. "I plan to tell reporters that you did not leak the classified information, nor would you condone doing so. Is that correct?"

"Yes," he replied. Then we talked about which reporters I planned to call. Scooter hung up and I set about my disagreeable task.