

SCOTTIE MCC'S CHRONOLOGY: SEPTEMBER 27

I said yesterday that Scottie McC was still protecting Bush—either deliberately or out of blind faith. One of the areas where that's apparent is in his discussion of efforts to have both Rove and Libby exonerated in fall 2003. Scottie McC presents some significant new details about discussions of the leak within the White House just as DOJ started the CIA leak investigation. But he presents a chronology that downplays the degree to which those White House discussions were a reaction to public news that the DOJ had already started a probe.

Take a look at this chronology—showing the known events in the middle column, and Scottie McC's details in the right-hand column.

Date	Events	Scottie's Events
September 16	CIA requests investigation	Scottie first asks Rove about leak: "You weren't one of Novak's sources, right?" "Right" Russell Mokhiber asks about Rove
September 26	DOJ officially launches investigation	
	NBC leaks news of investigation	
September 27		Scottie asks Rove about leak
September 28	1X2X6 Dana Priest and Mike Allen article	
September 29		Bush tells Scottie Rove didn't leak (7 AM)
		Scottie asks Rove whether he condoned leak
		"That morning" the WaPo reports that DOJ opened an investigation
	Scottie emphasizes the White House has received no official warning and denies Rove's involvement, mentioning Bush	
	(Evening) Ashcroft informs Gonzales who informs Andy Card to retain materials	

What's most important about Scottie McC's chronology is that he never admits that the White House learned and responded to leaked news

of the investigation that appeared on September 26 and instead suggested they only responded to news reports and—ultimately—the belated official notice DOJ gave the White House on September 29. Here's the description Scottie McC gives of that timing:

On September 16, the CIA informed the Justice Department about its completed investigation into the disclosure of Valerie Plame's name and undercover status and requested that the FBI "initiate an investigation of this matter." Justice advised the CIA on September 29, 2003, that its counterespionage section supported the request for an investigation. The clear implication was that there was good reason to believe a crime had been committed in the leaking of Plame's name. The White House would be informed about the Justice Department's decision later that evening.

By starting his chronology this way, Scottie McC hides the fact that NBC first reported the DOJ investigation on Friday evening, September 26, three days before the White House officially learned of the investigation.

September 27

That's particularly important given one of the new details Scottie McC's narrative reveals—that both he and Claire Buchan learned from Rove on September 27 that Rove had spoken with Novak during leak week. Scottie McC found out after Mike Allen emailed Rove for comment on the famous 1X2X6 story [now behind the firewall].

Rove got in touch with my trusted deputy Claire Buchan, letting her know he'd received an email inquiry from Mike for the story.

[snip]

Claire spoke with Rove before I returned

to the White House in the staff vans. I arrived back at my office sometime after 1:00 P.M., and a short time later got the rundown from her.

She informed me that Rove had volunteered to her that Novak had called him about Plame. He hadn't confirmed Plame's CIA status because he didn't know about it

I replied in bewilderment, "Karl spoke to Novak?"

One of the reasons the timing is so important, after all, is that Rove and Novak surely learned on September 26 of the investigation. So when Karl told Scottie McC the explanation for his Novak conversation on September 27, it is quite possible he spoke to Novak in the interim. Here's what Rove said on September 27, which is different than what he said on September 16.

He repeated to me what he had told Claire earlier in the day: "He [Novak] said he'd heard that Wilson's wife worked at the CIA. I told him I couldn't confirm it because I didn't know."

Also note, this is somewhat different than saying "Oh, you've heard that too?" as Rove testified he said to Novak.

Scottie McC's report of this exchange includes another important obfuscation. He claims that Allen did not know which two Senior Administration Officials were purported to have told six journalists about Plame.

Mike did not know the names of the aides alleged to have been involved in the leak, but he and Priest viewed their source as credible and planned to run with the story.

That's not exactly what Allen said in his story published the following day.

The official would not name the leakers for the record and would not name the journalists.

The implication of that construction is clear: the SAO would name the leakers—but not on the record, whereas the SAO would not name the journalists involved at all. If the SAO named the leakers off the record for Allen as this sentence suggests, and then Allen immediately emailed Rove directly about his story, it sure suggests that Rove was one of those two leakers the SAO named.

Thus far into Scottie McC's chronology, he is hiding two facts that should have made him think twice before he publicly exonerated Rove on September 29:

- Rove had already been less than forthcoming with Scottie McC, when he said on September 16 that he was "not one of Novak's sources" but did not reveal he had spoken to Novak about Plame.
- Either Scottie McC misunderstood what Allen said, Allen's article was misleading, or Scottie McC had evidence that—after Allen learned the identities of the two leakers—he called Rove for comment, and therefore evidence that the SAO was implicating Rove.

Those two facts, of course, might make readers much less sympathetic to Scottie McC for having bought Rove's lies from September 2003.

Incidentally, here's how Allen recorded Scottie McC's response to his email inquiry in the

famous 1X2X6 article.

White House press secretary Scott McClellan said yesterday that he knows of no leaks about Wilson's wife. "That is not the way this White House operates, and no one would be authorized to do such a thing." McClellan said. "I don't have any information beyond an anonymous source in a media report to suggest there is anything to this. If someone has information of this nature, then he or she should report it to the Department of Justice.

McClellan, who Rove had speak for him, said of Wilson's comments: "It is a ridiculous suggestion, and it is simply not true." McClellan was asked about Wilson's charge at a White House briefing Sept. 16 and said the accusation is "totally ridiculous."

The first paragraph must reflect a September 27 conversation with Allen (since it refers to an anonymous source), whereas the second paragraph quotes what Scottie McC said on September 16. But we now know that Scottie McC's comments—that the only reason he had to believe Rove was a source—was a response to Allen's inquiry to Rove.

There are two more key dates that Scottie presents in the best light that I will explore in a follow-up post.