

DICK'S TALKING POINTS, TWO

When Libby was first asked about any discussions he had with Cheney in response to Joe Wilson's op-ed, he first claimed he had not discussed the op-ed until after the Novak column (though with his aborted discussion of a "conver-"sation, he may have been thinking of the July 9 conversation he had with Novak and subsequently hid).

I don't recall that conversation until after the, until after the Novak piece. I don't recall it during this week of July 6. I recall it after the Novak conver – after the Novak article appeared I recall it , and I recall being asked by the Vice President early on, you know, about this envoy, you know, who is it and – but I don't recall that, early on he asked about it in connection with the wife, although he may well have given the note that I took.

Q. And so your recollection is that he wrote on July – that you discussed with the Vice President, did his wife send him on a junket? As a response to the July 14th Novak column that said, he was sent because his wife sent him and she works at the CIA?

A. I don't recall discussing it –yes, I don't recall discussing it in connection with when this article first appeared. I recall it later.

Then, when Fitz points out the utter absurdity of discussing with Cheney, speculatively, that Plame was purportedly involved in sending her husband, after Novak had already reported that fact directly, Libby shifts, and tries to claim they talked about it after July 10 when–he claimed–Tim Russert had told him of Plame's

identity.

Q. And are you telling us under oath that from July 6th to July 14th you never discussed with Vice President Cheney whether Mr. Wilson's wife worked at the CIA?

A. No, no, I'm not saying that. On July 10 or 11 I learned, I thought anew, that the wife – that, that reporters I lwere telling us that the wife worked at the CIA. And I may have had a conversation then with the Vice President either late on the 11th or on the 12th in which I relayed that reporters were saying that.

Basically, Libby was trying to date the notations Cheney had made on Wilson's op-ed ("Or did his wife send him on a junket?") to a time after journalists might have known of Plame's identity. If he couldn't do that, after all, it would serve as proof that Cheney knew of Plame's purported role in Wilson's trip—and was obsessing about it—shortly before Plame's identity got leaked to at least four different reporters. It would highlight the fact that Cheney's notations prettly closely matched the talking points given to Matt Cooper and Walter Pincus and Bob Novak.

The problem is—as I pointed out during the trial—Cheney's own talking points made it clear that he had already read Wilson's op-ed on July 8. Cheney actually **changed his talking points in direct response to Wilson's July 6 op-ed on July 8**, proving Libby's lies to be false, but also proving that Cheney was well aware of Plame's purported role (and therefore, her CIA identity) when he was responding to journalists on the day Plame's name was first leaked to Bob Novak.

That's the context for Murray Waas' report today—that Cheney admitted to Fitz and the FBI that he had changed his talking points on July 8 in an attempt to get journalists looking into Plame's purported role in Joe's trip.

Vice President Dick Cheney, according to a still-highly confidential FBI report, admitted to federal investigators that he rewrote talking points for the press in July 2003 that made it much more likely that the role of then-covert CIA-officer Valerie Plame in sending her husband on a CIA-sponsored mission to Africa would come to light.

Cheney conceded during his interview with federal investigators that in drawing attention to Plame's role in arranging her husband's Africa trip reporters might also unmask her role as CIA officer.

Cheney denied to the investigators, however, that he had done anything on purpose that would lead to the outing of Plame as a covert CIA operative. But the investigators came away from their interview with Cheney believing that he had not given them a plausible explanation as to how he could focus attention on Plame's role in arranging her husband's trip without her CIA status also possibly publicly exposed. At the time, Plame was a covert CIA officer involved in preventing Iran from obtaining weapons of mass destruction, and Cheney's office played a central role in exposing her and nullifying much of her work.

As Fitz pointed out in his closing argument, Cheney changed his first talking point from,

The Vice President's office did not request the mission to Niger.

To,

It is not clear who authorized Joe Wilson's trip to Niger.

(The "VP did not request" became his second talking point.)

That is, Cheney's new talking points raised a question the answer to which was—Cheney believed—"Valerie Plame, Joe Wilson's CIA spook wife." Which, as Cheney apparently admitted to the FBI, might raise the chances that Plame would be outed—as happened like a charm with Matt Cooper and John Dickerson. Dickerson, recall, was instructed to look into who sent Wilson, and Cooper answered that question for Dickerson with help from Rove: Wilson's wife.

Now, Murray points out that Cheney's admission—certainly from the perspective of June 2004, when Cheney was interviewed—would make it more likely that Cheney had a role in outing Plame. Frankly, when you put Judy's testimony together with Libby's notes and Addington's testimony, that case has already been proved, and for much earlier in the week than Murray's discussing (since it proves that, on Cheney's order, Libby was asking Addington about both Plame and Wilson in the preparation to talk to Judy). But, people are thick, so hopefully Murray's reporting—apparently direct from Cheney's FBI interview—will convince some people to actually look at the available evidence.

There's a lot more that Murray's post suggests, though, both about Fitzgerald's investigation and about Cheney's direct role in Plame's outing. Only, you're going to have to wait until tomorrow to get that!!