

BUSH OPTS FOR CONTINUED PROTECTION OVER PAYBACK

When Cheney's people wanted to shore up the cover story for Dick Cheney's involvement in leaking Valerie Plame's identity, they went to Michael Isikoff. So I guess it's not surprising that Isikoff would be the outlet for conservative fury over the news that Bush did not pardon Scooter Libby.

In a move that has keenly disappointed some of his strongest conservative allies, President Bush has decided not to pardon Vice President Dick Cheney's former chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, for his 2007 conviction in the CIA leak case, two White House officials said Monday.

[snip]

But the decision not to pardon Libby stunned some longtime Bush backers who had been quietly making the case for the former vice presidential aide in recent weeks. A number of Libby's allies had raised the issue with White House officials, arguing that as a loyal aide who played a key role in shaping Bush's foreign policy during the president's first term, including the decision to invade Iraq, Libby deserved to have the stain of his felony conviction erased from the record. In the only public sign of the lobbying campaign, The Wall Street Journal published an editorial strongly urging Libby's pardon.

"I'm flabbergasted," said one influential Republican activist, who had raised the issue with White House aides, but who asked not to be identified

criticizing the president. Ambassador Richard Carlson, the vice chairman of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a neo-conservative think tank, added that he too was "shocked" at Bush's denial of a pardon for Libby.

"George Bush has always prided himself on doing the right thing regardless of the polls or the pundits," Carlson said. "Now he is leaving office with a shameful cloud over his head." Carlson, who was among those who recently weighed in on behalf of Libby with the White House and previously raised money for his legal defense fund, said that Libby had taken a "knife in the heart" from critics of the president and deserved to have his conviction erased.

Apparently, none of these conservative wailers understand that pardoning Libby would negate Libby's ability to invoke the Fifth Amendment if, say, John Conyers ever held a hearing on George Bush's role in leaking Valerie Plame's identity. And so Scooter Libby will remain a felon—at least until the time when another Republican lands in the White House and pardons him.

Likewise the **other** people whose pardons would have exposed Bush to some serious trouble: Rove, Yoo, and above all Alberto Gonzales.

In fact, one of the more interesting details from Bush's last acts is this list: the dead-enders who accompanied Bush on his trip back to Texas.

Among the passengers, longtime Bush family, friends, and staffers included the former president's mother and father and daughters Jenna and Barbara, **Karl Rove**, Karen Hughes, Dan Bartlett, Josh Bolten, Joel Kaplan, Jared Weinstein, Mike Meece, Andy Card, Don and Susie Evans, Blake Gottesman, Clay and Ann

Johnson, Ed Gillespie, Barry Jackson,
Joe Hagin, Israel Hernandez, Jeanne
Johnson Phillips, Margaret Spellings,
Alberto Gonzales, Brad Freeman, Jim and
Debbie Francis, and Roland and Lois
Betts. [my emphasis]

Huh. Gonzales sticking with W until the end.
Given that Gonzales was recently whining that he
had not yet received any wingnut welfare, I'm
hoping, for his sake, that Bush's rich friends
have addressed that oversight (well, okay, I'm
actually taking some pleasure that Gonzales
remains unemployable).

Because it sure appears that Bush stayed true to
himself: putting his own welfare above that of
those who have protected him for so long.