

DICK ASKS OBAMA TO WAVE HIS MAGIC WAND

During the week that Dick Cheney ordered Libby to out Valerie Plame, Mary Matalin told Libby that "Bush" should order everything on the Wilsons declassified (it's not clear whether Matalin meant this to include Plame's identity or not). She said "the President should wave his magic wand" to declassify the oppo on the Wilsons. (She said this in the same conversation, IIRC, in which she called Joe Wilson a snake.)

I thought of that today when I read Cheney's latest attempt to pressure Obama to declassify his propaganda on torture. (h/t Bob Fertik)

I saw that information as vice president, and I reviewed some of it again at the National Archives last month. I've formally asked that it be declassified so the American people can see the intelligence we obtained, the things we learned, and the consequences for national security. And as you may have heard, last week that request was formally rejected.

It's worth recalling that ultimate power of declassification belongs to the President himself. President Obama has used his declassification power to reveal what happened in the interrogation of terrorists. Now let him use that same power to show Americans what did not happen, thanks to the good work of our intelligence officials.

C'mon, Obama, wave that magic wand, Dick appears to be begging. A wonder, huh, that he's resorting to selective declassification again to try to win a political argument.

Selective declassification, that is, and a selective memory. Central to Cheney's narrative,

you see, is that Obama "used his declassification power to reveal what happened in the interrogation of terrorists." Now, to be fair, Obama **did** participate in discussions of whether or not to release those documents. But ACLU didn't get the documents from Obama or the White House. It got them from DOJ, the originator of the memos. Those memos got handed over in the same way any routine successful FOIA request would (even if this did end up being a non-routine FOIA request).

I guess in Dick Cheney's little mind, it always has to be about the executive waving his magic wand.

Update: Ah jeebus. As if working from a script, Fox's Major Garrett rushed off to the press conference and started waving Dick's magic wand for him.

Q A follow-up on Mark's question, does the President agree or disagree with the Vice President's contention that he has the authority to declassify the CIA memos? Does he agree with that?

MR. GIBBS: I think the government obviously has the ability to – but I don't want to be flip –

Q Cheney says the President, if he wanted to, could declassify –

MR. GIBBS: I don't want to be flip on this, but I –

Q I just want to make sure that the President – do you agree with that or disagree with that?

MR. GIBBS: That the government has the ability?

Q The President has the sole executive authority, if he chose to, to declassify those memos and make them public, redacted –

MR. GIBBS: Well, I think the original

executive authority would be at the CIA. That's the determination that was made on his first request and, again, Major, we were – as I understand it, the CIA was very cognizant of the process by which it was asked and the process by which it went through, that that was treated –

Q Right, and the Vice President acknowledged that process in his speech, then he said, the President has the authority to overrule that. I'm asking if you agree or disagree with that.

MR. GIBBS: I would suggest that if there's a formal submission by the Vice President for renewed declassification based on another method –

Q Who would he make it to? The President?

MR. GIBBS: No, well, I think he'd send the letter to the same place he sent it in – many weeks ago to the CIA.

Q But do you agree with his contention the President, if he so chose, could declassify these memos?

MR. GIBBS: I think the President has declassification powers, yes.

Q Okay.

MR. GIBBS: But I don't –

Q But at this point he has no intention of exercising those for these memos.

MR. GIBBS: I'd have to ask him.

Q Please do.

MR. GIBBS: Again, I think that there's – the Vice President has used the submission process – again, I'm not trying to be flip here, but I don't want to – I guess it's the short answer of saying that I think the CIA would

probably want –

Q What Mark and I are getting at is the Vice President is alleging that the President is intentionally depriving the country of a certain amount of facts it could evaluate on its own.

MR. GIBBS: That I would disagree with. That I would disagree with because, again, the process was gone through – the Vice President understands the declassification of very sensitive classified information. That's why he made the – I assume the reason that he made that request originally was – through that process was done so because he understood how that process worked.

Q Right. But we've asked, many of us here, in the last couple of weeks, does the President have any intention of declassifying these. And I guess renewing that –

MR. GIBBS: I will certainly –

Q – general request, since you've acknowledged he has the power to do so?

MR. GIBBS: I will check.