


THE CIA DOESN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT TOM CRUISE'S LOBBYING FOR SCIENTOLOGISTS

 I'm mostly amused by Steven Aftergood's report that the CIA refuses to release the PDB-related materials introduced at Scooter Libby's trial.

Even though certain information concerning the President's Daily Brief (PDB) was redacted and declassified for use in the prosecution of former vice presidential aide Scooter Libby in 2006, that same information is nonetheless "currently and properly classified," the Central Intelligence Agency said (pdf) last week. The Agency denied release of the material under the Freedom of Information Act.

The existence of the declassified PDB material was disclosed in a January 9, 2006 letter (pdf) from Special Counsel Patrick J. Fitzgerald to Mr. Libby's attorney. He wrote: "In response to our requests, we have received [from CIA] a very discrete amount of material relating to PDBs and discussions involving Mr. Libby and/or Vice President Cheney concerning or relating to the PDBs. We have provided to Mr. Libby and his counsel (or are in the process of providing such documents consistent with the process of a declassification review) copies of any pages in our possession... in the redacted form in which we received them."

Since declassified PDBs are comparatively rare, we submitted a

Freedom of Information Act request in February 2006 for a copy of the PDB-related material that was declassified by CIA for the Libby prosecution. Last week, the CIA responded that it had located the requested material but that "we determined [it] is currently and properly classified and must be denied in its entirety."

As Aftergood notes, two of the PDB-related tables of contents were introduced at the trial—Libby's briefing for June 14, 2003, and Cheney's briefing for July 14, 2003. Those tables of contents are prominently stamped "unclassified," but they're entirely redacted except for a few logistical notes and Libby briefer Craig Schmall's notes from those briefings, which are:

- Why was the Amb told this was a VP office question? Joe Wilson Valerie Wilson (June 14)
- Tom Cruise and Penelope Cruz at his office. (June 14)
- Sensitive memo from DDCI] RETURN (June 14)
- Senior intel official: someone in the sessions spoke directly to the press > press is calling Scooter directly – he asked who he spoke to directly (June 14)
- Did you read the Novak article? Not your problem. (July 14)

For some reason, the CIA refused to release these two highly-redacted PDB-related documents. I guess they don't want you to know that these top-secret briefing sessions include discussions

of the private meetings that Scientologists get with the Vice President's Chief of Staff (Cruise and Cruz were lobbying Libby—as they had lobbied Ricard Armitage that same week—to pressure Germany about its treatment of Scientologists). Our culture of secrecy is protecting some really important secrets, I guess.

That said, just to piss off the CIA, here's what—according to Schmall's testimony—the June 14 PDB contained, in general form, along with the daily threat assessment. Libby lawyer and graymail artist John Cline led Schmall through this list in an attempt to introduce the memory defense without having to put Libby on the stand.

Q I want to take you through those topics and see if you can recall briefing Mr. Libby about them on that Saturday June 14th. Now, all I want you to do, in answer to my question, is say yes, you recall or no, you don't recall. I don't want you to expand, okay?

A Okay. Recall briefing it on that day, sir, correct?

Q That's correct. Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby on Saturday, June 14th, about a bomb that had been diffused near a western residential compound in Yemen?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby about the police arresting an individual responsible for a terrorist bombing in a country that I can't identify?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby about nearly simultaneous explosions in the capitol of a country?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby about an East African extremist network?

A No, sir.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby about information on a possible Al-Qaeda

attack in the United States?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby about a concern involving a specific vulnerability to terrorist attacks?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby about a proposed Middle East security plan?

A No, sir.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby about a country's security measures hampering Al-Qaeda's activities?

A No, sir.

Q How about an international organization's position concerning a country's nuclear program, do you recall briefing him on Saturday, June 14th?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q How about briefing Mr. Libby on the, that Iraq's porous borders present a security threat?

A No, sir.

Q How about violent demonstrations in Iran?

A No, sir.

Q Do you recall that you gave Mr. Libby briefings on a total of 27 items that day?

A I'm not aware of how many items were briefed that day.

Q Did you review the unredacted table of contents before you came over to testify?

A Yes, I had seen them before.

Q And based on your review of that unredacted table of contents, are you able to confirm for us that there were 27 items that you briefed Mr. Libby on that day?

A No, sir. I really didn't pay that much attention to these specific items in the briefings.

Q You mean in preparing for your testimony?

A Yes, sir.

Q At the time you paid close attention?

A Absolutely, sir.

Q Because you knew this was very important stuff, right?

A Yes, sir.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby on June 14th on the challenge posed by Palestinian terrorist groups to improving relations between the Palestinian authorities and Israel?

A No, sir.

Q Do you recall that Mr. Libby requested that several items from the June 14, 2003, list, several of these articles that you gave him, be returned to him on June 16th?

A I don't recall that specifically.

Q That did happen from time to time, correct?

A Yes, sir.

Q You just don't recall what happened on this day?

A Not on June 14, no, sir.

Q Now, I've asked you about some of the intelligence articles that you briefed Mr. Libby about on Saturday, June 14th. You don't recall any of them; right?

A That's correct, sir.

Q Now, I'm going to ask you about some of the items on that list of terrorist threats that we talked about before but can't name. Are you familiar with what I'm talking about?

A Yes, sir.

Q Do you remember briefing Mr. Libby on Saturday, June 14, about the concern over possible suicide operations to hijacked aircraft at Al-Qaeda International Airport by a terrorist group with links to Al-Qaeda?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby on Saturday, June 14th, about a concern about terrorists providing support to a

planned terrorist operation or business transaction by Al-Qaeda?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q Do you remember briefing Mr. Libby on Saturday, June 14th, about potential suicide attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq by a terrorist group?

A No, sir.

Q Do you recall briefing Mr. Libby on Saturday, June 14th, about potential terrorist attacks at unspecified times against the U.S. Embassy and the British High Commission in Kenya?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q Do you recall, Mr. Schmall, that there were 11 pages of terrorist threats in that list that you gave him that day, Saturday, June 14th?

A It's not clear. I'm not sure whether I actually gave it to him that day. It wasn't listed on my table of contents. And there came a time when frankly we stopped putting that compilation in the briefing books.

Q I understand. If it has been represented to us by the Agency that this was presented to him that day, would you agree with me that those items were in there or do you not recall?

A I don't recall, sir.

Q I take it you don't recall briefing Mr. Libby that an unspecified group was observed videotaping facilities near a U.S. university on Saturday, June 14th?

A No, sir, I don't.

Q That list of items that I've just run down for you, both the articles and the terrorist threats, I understand you don't recall anything that happened on June 14th in terms of what you briefed Mr. Libby on, correct?

A Yes, sir.

Q I gather, though, that those types of items, putting aside the question of when you stopped presenting the list of the terrorist items, those are the kinds

of items that would be briefed to Mr.
Libby six days a week, correct?
A Yes, sir.

There. I've just exposed highly classified PDB-related materials the CIA says cannot be released. Pretty impressive huh?

(I think admitting that our top CIA briefers are wasting time talking about Scientologists might be an even greater threat than releasing the information in the actual briefing document.)