

# POLITICO'S VANDEHEI AND ALLEN JOIN THE "JUDY MILLER CLUB FOR CHENEY STENOGRAPHERS"



graphic: ImageChef.com

Suppose you had a 90-minute interview with Dick Cheney just after a Senate report came out concluding—among other things—that,

After bin Laden's escape, some military and intelligence analysts and the press criticized the Pentagon's failure to mount a full-scale attack despite the tough rhetoric by President Bush. Franks, Vice President Dick Cheney and others defended the decision, arguing that the intelligence was inconclusive about the Al Qaeda leader's location. But the review of existing literature, unclassified government records and interviews with central participants underlying this report removes any lingering doubts and makes it clear that Osama bin Laden was within our grasp at Tora Bora.

Don't you think you'd ask him, explicitly, why he had defended the decision not to send US troops after Osama bin Laden at Tora Bora when it was clear that the decision had allowed bin Laden to escape? "Mr. Cheney," you might ask, "it has been shown pretty irrefutably that you let OBL get away. Why'd you defend your decision allowing him to escape when you knew it had led to his escape? Why did you ignore Henry Crumpton's warning—briefed to you and President Bush personally at the end of November 2001—that

an escape route to Pakistan was wide open and Afghan troops wouldn't prevent OBL from escaping through it?"

But this is as close as Jim "Pool Boy" VandeHei and Mike Allen got in an interview with Cheney:

But Cheney rejected any suggestion that Obama had to decide on a new strategy for Afghanistan because the one employed by the previous administration failed.

Cheney was asked if he thinks the Bush administration bears any responsibility for the disintegration of Afghanistan because of the attention and resources that were diverted to Iraq. "I basically don't," he replied without elaborating.

I guess a follow-up question would have been too much to ask for from Pool Boy and his sidekick?

After apparently not asking such an obvious question, after getting stiffed on their more general question about Cheney and Bush's diversion of resources to the Iraq War (I don't suppose Pool Boy and friend have been watching the Iraq Inquiry in the UK, either, and I'm quite certain it'd be too much for them to ask about Cheney's personal role fucking up our Pakistan policy in more recent years), they then serve as stenographers for yet another Cheney attack on Obama.

Somehow, VandeHei and Allen managed amazing feats of hunting mastery last week, but they couldn't manage to ask glaringly obvious questions before then turning around and writing down every little thing Cheney told them to say.

And here's another question.

It is just a remarkable coincidence that the day after John Harris invented this complaint,

Politicians of both parties have embraced the idea that this country – because of its power and/or the hand of Providence – should be a singular force

in the world. It would be hugely unwelcome for Obama if the perception took root that he is comfortable with a relative decline in U.S. influence or position in the world.

On this score, the reviews of Obama's recent Asia trip were harsh.

His peculiar bow to the emperor of Japan was symbolic. But his lots-of-velvet, not-much-iron approach to China had substantive implications.

On the left, the budding storyline is that Obama has retreated from human rights in the name of cynical realism. On the right, it is that he is more interested in being President of the World than President of the United States, a critique that will be heard more in December as he stops in Oslo to pick up his Nobel Prize and then in Copenhagen for an international summit on curbing greenhouse gases.

Cheney voiced precisely that complaint?

During the campaign, Cheney recalled, he saw Obama as "sort of a mainline, traditional Democrat – liberal, from the liberal wing of the party." But Cheney said he is increasingly persuaded by the notion that Obama "doesn't believe in American exceptionalism – the idea that the United States is a special nation, that we are the greatest, freest nation mankind has ever known."

"When I see the way he operates, I am increasingly convinced that he's not as committed to or as wedded to that concept as most of the presidents I've known, Republican or Democrat," he said. "I am worried. And I find as I get out around the country, a lot of other people are worried, too."

What a remarkable coinkydink, that the Pool  
Boy's editor is the **only other person in the  
country** worried about Obama and exceptionalism.