

WILKERSON: CHENEY AND RUMSFELD KNEW GITMO DETAINEES WERE INNOCENT

About a hundred of you have pointed to this story, which reports that Lawrence Wilkerson signed a declaration to support the lawsuit of a former Gitmo detainee, Adel Hassan Hamad, stating that Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld knew there were innocent people at Gitmo.

Colonel Wilkerson, who was General Powell's chief of staff when he ran the State Department, was most critical of Mr Cheney and Mr Rumsfeld. He claimed that the former Vice-President and Defence Secretary knew that the majority of the initial 742 detainees sent to Guantánamo in 2002 were innocent but believed that it was "politically impossible to release them".

[snip]

He also claimed that one reason Mr Cheney and Mr Rumsfeld did not want the innocent detainees released was because "the detention efforts would be revealed as the incredibly confused operation that they were". This was "not acceptable to the Administration and would have been severely detrimental to the leadership at DoD [Mr Rumsfeld at the Defence Department]".

Referring to Mr Cheney, Colonel Wilkerson, who served 31 years in the US Army, asserted: "He had absolutely no concern that the vast majority of Guantánamo detainees were innocent ... If hundreds of innocent individuals had to suffer in order to detain a handful of hardcore terrorists, so be it."

He alleged that for Mr Cheney and Mr Rumsfeld "innocent people languishing in Guantánamo for years was justified by the broader War on Terror and the small number of terrorists who were responsible for the September 11 attacks".

Now, as Mary has pointed out, there was actually a study done in summer 2002 that showed that vast majority of those at Gitmo were innocent. So this is not news.

But I certainly welcome some public discussion about the maltreatment of a number of innocent people at Gitmo as we enter back into discussions on closing Gitmo.