

CORRECTING THE RECORD ON VALERIE PLAME

By
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I submit this statement to the Congress in an effort to correct a malicious and disingenuous smear campaign that has been executed against a friend and former colleague, Valerie (Plame) Wilson. Neither Valerie, nor her husband, Ambassador Joseph Wilson has asked me to do anything on their behalf. I am speaking up because I was raised to stop bullies. In the case of Valerie Plame she is facing a gang of bullies that is being directed by the Republican National Committee.

I entered on duty at the CIA in September 1985 as a member of the Career Trainee Program. Senator Orin Hatch had written a letter of recommendation on my behalf and I believe that helped open the doors to me at the CIA. From the first day all members of my training class were undercover. In other words, we had to lie to our family and friends about where we worked. We could only tell those who had an absolute need to know where we worked. In my case, I told my wife. Most of us were given official cover, which means that on paper we worked for some other U.S. Government Agency. People with official cover enjoy the benefits of an official passport, usually a black passport--i.e., a diplomatic passport. If we were caught overseas engaged in espionage activity the black passport was a get out of jail free card. It accords the bearer the protections of the Geneva Convention.

Valerie Plame was a classmate of mine from the day she started with the CIA. At the time I only knew her as Valerie P. Even though all of us in the training class held Top Secret Clearances, we were asked to limit our knowledge of our other classmates to the first initial of their last name. So, Larry J. knew Val P. rather than Valerie Plame. Her name did not become a part of my consciousness until her cover was betrayed by the Government officials who gave columnist Robert Novak her true name.

Although Val started off with official cover, she later joined a select group of intelligence officers a few years later when she became a NOC, i.e. a Non-Official Cover officer. That meant she agreed to operate overseas without the protection of a diplomatic passport. She was using cover, which we now know because of the leak to Robert Novak, of the consulting firm Brewster-Jennings. When she traveled overseas she did not use or have an official passport. If she had been

caught engaged in espionage activities while traveling overseas without the black passport she could have been executed.

We must put to bed the lie that she was not undercover. For starters, if she had not been undercover then the CIA would not have referred the matter to the Justice Department. Some reports, such as one in the Washington Times that Valerie Plame's supervisor at the CIA, Fred Rustman, said she told friends and family she worked at the CIA and that her cover was light. These claims are not true. Rustman, who supervised Val in one of her earliest assignments, left the CIA in 1990 and did not stay in social contact with Valerie. His knowledge of Val's cover is dated. He does not know what she has done during the past 15 years.

Val only told those with a need to know about her status in order to safeguard her cover, not compromise it. Val has never been a flamboyant, insecure person who felt the need to tell people what her "real" job was. She was content with being known as an energy consultant married to Joe Wilson and the mother of twins. Despite the repeated claims of representatives for the Republican National Committee, the Wilson's neighbors did not know where Valerie really worked until Novak's op-ed appeared.

I would note that not a single member of our training class has come forward to denounce Valerie or question her bona fides. To the contrary, those we have talked to have endorsed what those of us who have left the CIA are doing to defend her reputation and honor.

As noted in the joint letter submitted to Congressional leaders earlier this week, the RNC is repeating the lie that Valerie was nothing more than a glorified desk jockey and could not possibly have any cover worth protecting. To those such as Victoria Toensing, Representative Peter King, P. J. O'Rourke, and Representative Roy Blunt I can only say one thing—you are wrong. I am stunned that some political leaders have such ignorance about a matter so basic to the national security structure of this nation.

Robert Novak's compromise of Valerie caused even more damage. It subsequently led to scrutiny of her cover company. This not only compromised her "cover" company but potentially every individual overseas who had been in contact with that company or with her.

Another false claim is that Valerie sent her husband on the mission to Niger. According to the Senate Intelligence Committee Report issued

in July 2004, it is clear that the Vice President himself requested that the CIA provide its views on a Defense Intelligence Agency report that Iraq was trying to acquire uranium from Niger. The Vice President's request was relayed through the CIA bureaucracy to the Director of the Counter Proliferation Division at the CIA. Valerie worked for a branch in that Division.

The Senate Intelligence Report is frequently cited by Republican partisans as "proof" that Valerie sent her husband to Niger because she sent a memo describing her husband's qualifications to the Deputy Division Chief. Several news personalities, such as Chris Matthews and Bill O'Reilly continue to repeat this nonsense as proof. What the Senate Intelligence Committee does not include in the report is the fact that Valerie's boss had asked her to write a memo outlining her husband's qualifications for the job. She did what any good employee does; she gave her boss what he asked for.

The decision to send Joe Wilson on the mission to Niger was made by Valerie's bosses. She did not have the authority to sign travel vouchers, issue travel orders, or expend one dime of U.S. taxpayer dollars on her own. Yet, she has been singled out by the Republican National Committee and its partisans as a legitimate target of attack. It was Karl Rove who told Chris Matthews, "Wilson's wife is fair game".

What makes the unjustified and inappropriate attacks on Valerie Plame and her reputation so unfair is that there was no Administration policy position stipulating that Iraq was trying to acquire uranium in February 2002. That issue was still up in the air and, as noted by SSCI, Vice President Cheney himself asked for more information.

At the end of the day we are left with these facts. We went to war in Iraq on the premise that Saddam was reacquiring weapons of mass destruction. Joe Wilson was sent on a mission to Niger in response to a request initiated by the Vice President. Joe Wilson supplied information to the CIA that supported other reports debunking the claim that Saddam was trying to buy yellow cake uranium from Niger. When Joe went public with his information, which had been corroborated by the CIA in April 2003, the response from the White House was to call him a liar and spread the name of his wife around.

We sit here more than two years later and the storm of invective and smear against Ambassador Wilson and his wife, Valerie, continues. I voted for George Bush in November of 2000 because I wanted a President who knew what the meaning of "is" was. I was tired of

political operatives who spent endless hours on cable news channels parsing words. I was promised a President who would bring a new tone and new ethical standards to Washington.

So where are we? The President has flip flopped and backed away from his promise to fire anyone at the White House implicated in a leak. We now know from press reports that at least Karl Rove and Scooter Libby are implicated in these leaks. Instead of a President concerned first and foremost with protecting this country and the intelligence officers who serve it, we are confronted with a President who is willing to sit by while political operatives savage the reputations of good Americans like Valerie and Joe Wilson. This is wrong.

Without firm action by President Bush to return to those principles he promised to follow when he came to Washington, I fear our political debate in this country will degenerate into an argument about what the meaning of "leak" is. We deserve people who work in the White House who are committed to protecting classified information, telling the truth to the American people, and living by example the idea that a country at war with Islamic extremists cannot expend its efforts attacking other American citizens who simply tried to tell the truth.