

Dick Cheney: War Profiteer

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Questions persist about Vice-President Cheney's role in the ongoing investigation and scandal swirling about the White House. His chief of staff and confidante Lewis "Scooter" Libby has been indicted for perjury and obstruction of justice. Let's take a look at some personal incentives for Cheney's selling war to our country.

Cheney has pursued a political and corporate career to make himself very rich and powerful. He is the personification of a war profiteer who slid through the revolving door connecting the public and private sectors of the defense establishment on two occasions in a career that has served his relentless quest for power and profits.

As Defense Secretary, Mr. Cheney commissioned a study for the U.S. Department of Defense by Brown and Root Services (now Kellogg, Brown and Root), a wholly owned subsidiary of Halliburton. The study recommended that private firms like Halliburton should take over logistical support programs for U.S. military operations around the world. Just two years after he was Secretary of Defense, Cheney stepped through the revolving door linking the Department of Defense with defense contractors and became CEO of Halliburton. Halliburton was the principal beneficiary of Cheney's privatization efforts for our military's logistical support and Cheney was paid \$44 million for five year's work with them before he slipped back through the revolving door of war profiteering to become Vice-President of the United States. When asked about the money he received from Halliburton, Cheney said. "I tell you that the government had absolutely nothing to do with it."

The Bush administration has dished out lucrative reconstruction contracts in Iraq to favored U.S. based corporations including Halliburton and denied contracts to many Iraqi and foreign based companies. To the conquerors go the spoils was the message on December 11, 2003 when Bush said, "The taxpayers understand why it makes sense for countries that risk lives to participate in the contracts in Iraq, It's very simple. Our people risk their lives, friendly coalition folks risk their lives, and therefore the contracting is going to reflect that."

Bush's statement is a stunning admission of how much corrupt corporations control our foreign policy. Under Cheney's leadership Halliburton out did Enron in using offshore subsidiaries as tax shelters to hide profits to bilk U.S. taxpayers. Halliburton also utilized offshore subsidiaries to contract for services and sell banned equipment to rogue states like Iran, Iraq and Libya. This would be illegal if done directly by Halliburton.

At last count Halliburton had 58 offshore subsidiaries in Caribbean tax havens. With Cheney at the helm Halliburton's tax payments to the U.S. went from \$302 million in 1998 to zero in 1999, when they also received a refund of \$85 million from the Internal Revenue Service.

During Cheney's tenure as CEO from 1995 to 2000, Halliburton Products and Services set up shop in Iran. The Halliburton subsidiary does approximately \$40 million a year worth of oil field service work for the Iranian government. 60 Minutes correspondent Lesley Stahl visited the subsidiary in the Cayman Islands and found that it had no office and no employees. The mailing address was a local bank with which the subsidiary is registered. Stahl was met there by the bank's manager who informed her that all mail to the subsidiary is forwarded to Halliburton headquarters in Houston. Halliburton had created the subsidiary to allow itself to do illegal business with a rogue state and to skip out on its taxes in the process.

With Iran's president vowing to destroy Israel and being accused by the Bush administration of harboring and aiding al-Qaeda operatives, Cheney's company is doing business with Iran through a subsidiary and dodging its tax obligations to the U.S.

Halliburton has been more closely associated with the invasion of Iraq than any other corporation. Before the Iraq War began, it was 19th on the U.S. Army's list of top contractors and zoomed to number 1 in 2003. In 2003 Halliburton made \$4.2 billion from the U.S. government. Cheney stated he had , "severed all my ties with the company, gotten rid of all my financial interest."

Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) recently asserted that Cheney's stock options which were worth \$241,498 a year ago, are now valued at more than \$8 million- for an increase of 3,281% . Cheney has pledged to give the proceeds to charity. Cheney continues to received a deferred salary from the company. He was paid \$205,298 in 2001; \$162,392 in 2002; \$178,437 in 2003; and \$194,852 in 2004.

The Congressional Research Service has concluded that holding stock options while in elective office does constitute a "financial interest" whether or not the holder of the options donates the proceeds to charities, and deferred compensation is also a financial interest.

Calling on Cheney to sever his financial ties to Halliburton, Lautenberg points out that the company has already raked in more than \$10 billion for work in Iraq, and was handed some of the first Katrina contracts. The company has been criticized by auditors for its handling of no-bid contacts in Iraq, and there have been numerous allegations of over charging for services. Auditors found the firm marked up meal prices for troops and inflated gas prices in a deal with a Kuwaiti supplier. The company also built the American prison at Guantanamo Bay. Lautenberg said, "It is unseemly for the Vice President to continue to benefit from this company at the same time his Administration funnels billions of dollars to it."

Cheney's war profiteering requires redress and justice.

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