

The CIA Leak Case: The Bush spinmeisters' Kabuki dance with Patrick Fitzgerald.

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There is an interesting stylized dance taking place between the White House and Patrick Fitzgerald, the Special Prosecutor in the CIA leak case.

For weeks, there have been rumors inside the Beltway that something big would be announced about the case during the last weeks of September. The silence and lack of substantial leaks were indications that a major turn of events would soon occur. Yesterday afternoon, the White House quickly swore in John G. Roberts as Chief Justice, just hours after his Senate confirmation. Rather than wait for the next morning and thus get two days of puff ball coverage by the media, the White House wanted to clear the calendar on Friday for a possible announcement by Fitzgerald. The White House, unsure of what might be coming from the prosecutor, floated the story that Bush would “definitely” name a replacement for Sandra Day O’Connor on Friday.



The White House Kabuki dance with Patrick Fitzgerald

But then *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller was quickly released from prison in Alexandria Thursday night. No one expected it. In fact, the cable news channels were forced to show over three month-old file footage of Miller entering the US Courthouse in DC because they were also caught unprepared by the surprise announcement and lacked lead time to get reporters to the US Courthouse in Alexandria where Miller had been held for 85 days.

It was then announced that Miller had decided to cooperate with Fitzgerald and testify today before the Grand Jury in Washington, DC. Not surprisingly, the White House spin Kabuki dancers, fully expecting a Friday announcement from Fitzgerald, altered course and announced that Bush would not name a replacement for O’Connor until some time next week. The White House, unsure of when Fitzgerald might announce indictments, wants to keep the Supreme Court announcement ace up its sleeve in order to compete for news coverage when Fitzgerald makes his announcement.

It is clear that Miller was the missing link in Fitzgerald’s criminal probe of the leak that a number of CIA insiders have told this editor was “devastating” to the agency. Miller’s attorney claimed that Vice President Dick Cheney’s Chief of Staff I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, a target of the leak probe, had released her from a confidentiality pledge. But that agreement had already been reported months ago. Something has changed. A former Justice Department prosecutor told this editor that Fitzgerald is the type of prosecutor who starts

low in the food chain and works his way up to nab the big fish. Fitzgerald is said to have, very early on in the case, “flipped” John Hannah, Libby’s deputy.

One possible explanation for the sudden turn of events regarding Miller and Libby is that Fitzgerald may have also “flipped” Libby as a witness. A promise of limited immunity to Libby would have cleared the way for testimony from Miller on what she discussed with Cheney’s chief of staff. That means the ultimate target of Fitzgerald could be Cheney.

There’s an interesting footnote to the Cheney family’s recent activities. Lynne Cheney was recently spotted at a Washington, DC Pottery Barn buying items for the Cheney’s new \$2.7 million house in St. Michael’s on the eastern shore of Maryland. The Cheney’s will be close neighbors of the Rumsfelds.

Dick Cheney recently had surgery on two aneurysms behind his knees, thus taking him out of the public spotlight more than is the usual case. The Soviet leadership, which the Bush administration has striven so much to emulate, used to exile their sacked leaders to dachas in the countryside. Might the same thing be in store for a Vice President named as an unindicted co-conspirator in the CIA leak case? A quick resignation prior to the 2006 elections and replacement by a Rudy Giuliani or George Pataki, or [shudders] Jeb Bush? And, of course, in traditional GOP fashion, a presidential pardon of unindicted co-conspirator Cheney (a la Gerald Ford and unindicted Watergate co-conspirator Richard Nixon).

Meanwhile, GOP congressmen are beginning to abandon former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay. They are undoubtedly aware of the connections of DeLay to mobster money funneled by indicted GOP lobbyist Jack Abramoff. Even a puff piece by reporter Mark Leibovich on DeLay in yesterday’s *Washington Post’s* Style section did little to stop the continual shark bites on DeLay from his GOP colleagues. Of course, DeLay’s troubles come at the same time that one of his major supporters, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Israeli government, face an aggressive espionage probe by U.S. Attorney for Eastern Virginia Paul McNulty — indicted Defense Intelligence Agency official Larry Franklin has agreed to a plea bargain in return for his cooperation as a prosecution witness.

After almost five years of incessant outrages by the Bush regime, I have never been more optimistic that the tide may be beginning to turn.

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