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Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq

ROBERT PARRY

WPost's Editorial Fantasyland

By Robert Parry
March 8, 2007

Fred Hiatt's Washington Post editorial page and George W. Bush's presidency have a lot in common – most notably an arrogance of power so extreme that they believe their very words can alter reality.

With Bush, that record has been well established, from asserting that [Saddam Hussein never let the U.N. inspectors in](#) to hyping progress in the Iraq War. But editorial page editor Hiatt – in league with Post publisher Donald Graham – is not far behind.

After the conviction of former White House aide I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby for lying about and covering up the Bush administration's outing of covert CIA officer Valerie Plame, the Post's lead editorial continues to manufacture a false history of the case, again slamming Plame's husband, former Ambassador Joseph Wilson.

The real reality of the case is that in 2003, a hubristic administration sought to damage a critic, Wilson, who had offended Vice President Dick Cheney by accusing the White House of having “twisted” Iraq War intelligence. The anti-Wilson operation ended up exposing Wilson's CIA wife. Then, recognizing the potential criminality – not to mention the political dangers – the White House launched a cover-up.

But that is not what the Post's editorial page wants you to understand. It pins much of the blame for the scandal on Joe Wilson, whom the Post says “will be remembered as a blowhard.” The Post also distorts Wilson's statements in a way that parrots long-discredited White House talking points.

“Mr. Wilson was embraced by many because he was early in publicly charging that the Bush administration had ‘twisted,’ if not invented, facts in making the case for war against Iraq,” the Post editorial states.

“He claimed to have debunked evidence that Iraq was seeking uranium from Niger; suggested that he had been dispatched by Mr. Cheney to look into the matter; and alleged that his report had circulated at the highest levels of the

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administration.

“A bipartisan investigation by the Senate intelligence committee subsequently established that all of these claims were false – and that Mr. Wilson was recommended for the Niger trip by Ms. Plame, his wife.

“When this fact, along with Ms. Plame’s name, was disclosed in a column by Robert D. Novak, Mr. Wilson advanced yet another sensational charge: that his wife was a covert CIA operative and that senior White House officials had orchestrated the leak of her name to destroy her career and thus punish Mr. Wilson. ...

“The [Libby] trial has provided convincing evidence that there was no conspiracy to punish Mr. Wilson by leaking Ms. Plame’s identity – and no evidence that she was, in fact, covert.” [[Washington Post, March 7, 2007](#)]

Editorial Lies

Astonishingly, everything in this Post attack on Wilson is either a gross distortion or a lie.

Contrary to the Post’s account, Wilson did debunk suspicions that Iraq was seeking uranium from Niger. He was dispatched by the CIA because of questions asked by Cheney. (Wilson never said Cheney personally sent him.) His information did reach the highest levels of the administration, explaining why the CIA kept deleting references to the Niger claims from speeches.

The full Senate Intelligence Committee did not conclude that “all [Wilson’s] claims were false.” That assertion was pulled from “additional views” submitted by three right-wing Republicans – Sens. Pat Roberts, Orrin Hatch and Christopher Bond – who carried the White House’s water in claiming that Wilson’s statements “had no basis in fact.”

As for the CIA selection of Wilson, the Post editorial-page editors know that Wilson was chosen by senior CIA officials in the office of counter-proliferation – not by Valerie Plame – and that Wilson was well qualified for the assignment since he had served in embassies in Iraq and Niger. He also took on this task *pro bono*, with the CIA only paying for his expenses.

The Post knows, too, that Valerie Plame indeed was a covert CIA officer, despite the endless lying on this topic by right-wing operatives. Plus, Wilson was right again when he alleged that the White House was punishing him for his Iraq War criticism.

Indeed, the Washington Post’s own reporters have described this reality in the news pages. For instance, on Sept. 28, 2003, a Post news article reported that a White House official disclosed that the administration had informed at least six reporters about Plame and did so “purely and simply out of revenge”

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against Wilson.

Special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald made the same point in a court filing in the Libby case, stating that the investigation had uncovered a “concerted” effort by the White House to “discredit, punish or seek revenge against” Wilson because of his criticism of the administration. Hiatt can look it up. It was on the Post's front page. [[Washington Post, April 9, 2006](#)]

As for the lack of evidence at trial about Plame's covert status, the Post editorial leaves out the context: Libby's defense attorneys argued against admission of that evidence on the grounds that it would prejudice jurors who might be enflamed by the idea of exposing a covert CIA officer and her spy network. In addition, Plame's undercover work was not considered essential to a case narrowly constructed about Libby's lying.

So, what can be said about a newspaper's editorial board that willfully lies to its readers and slanders an American citizen, Joe Wilson, who took on a difficult assignment for his government at no pay and who later tried to blow the whistle on a White House misleading the public on an issue as important as war?

In a normal world, a newspaper would praise Wilson for his dedication and patriotism. But the Post editorial board can't seem to get past its own gullibility in buying into the administration's bogus WMD claims in 2002-03.

Rather than apologize for enabling Bush and Cheney to lead the nation into a disastrous war, Hiatt and Graham apparently have judged that they have the power to continue smearing Joe Wilson and other American citizens who had the foresight and courage to get the facts right.

[For more on the Post's Iraq War editorials, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Shame on the Post's Editorial Page](#)," "[Smearing Joe Wilson Again](#)" and "[Shame of the WPost, Again](#)." For a special report on the Libby case, see "[Zeroing in on Cheney-Bush](#)."]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq*, can be ordered at [secrecyandprivilege.com](#). It's also available at [Amazon.com](#), as is his 1999 book, *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'*.

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