

# Kucinich, Maloney and Sanders Go After Cheney

*[Sept 25 , 2003 1530 PDT (FTW) -- The heat is building to dump Cheney for the 2004 Presidential race. Under fire for continuing compensation fro Halliburton and for a fistful of lies about Iraq , the evidence is building solidly and the heat being placed on the Vice President is building up. We hope this effort continues and grows stronger in the coming months. Special thanks to TRUTHOUT ( [www.truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org) ) for bringing this letter to light. And special praise to Dennis Kucinich who is running much stronger in the hearts and minds of the people than FOX, ABC, or any other media organ will acknowledge. Representatives Kucinich, Maloney and Sanders are members of the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations. Kucinich is the ranking member. - MCR]*

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Wednesday 17 September 2003

The Honorable Dick Cheney  
Vice President  
Office of the Vice President of the United States  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
Washington , DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President:

On July 21, 2003 , we sent a letter to you inquiring about your role in the dissemination of the disinformation that Iraq purchased uranium from Niger . We asked you ten questions relating to your direct personal visits to CIA 's Iraq analysts; your request for an investigation of the Niger uranium claim that resulted in an investigation by a former U.S. ambassador, and your several high-profile public assertions about Iraq 's alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons. To date, we have not

received your response to our inquiries.

Since our last letter to you, you spoke at the American Enterprise Institute and once again made reference to the already proven false assertion that Iraq was reconstituting its nuclear weapons program. In order to legitimize the war, you cited findings listed in the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), some of which had been refuted months before you cited them.

Most recently, on September 14, 2003, after almost a year of repeating the claim, you finally admitted the inaccuracy of your previous assertions on Iraq's nuclear capabilities when you appeared on *Meet the Press*. The chronology shows that you knew or should have known that the claim was false when you first made it on *Meet the Press* in March 2003. We would like to inquire as to why your admission took so long to be made publicly. We would also like answers to our previous questions about your role in the dissemination of the nuclear uranium claim.

I. Concerning "unusual" personal visits by the Vice President to CIA analysts.

According to *The Washington Post*, June 5, 2003, you made "multiple" "unusual" visits to CIA to meet directly with Iraq analysts. The *Post* reported: "Vice President Cheney and his most senior aide made multiple trips to the CIA over the past year to question analysts studying Iraq's weapons programs."

These visits were unprecedented. Normally, Vice Presidents, yourself included, receive regular briefings from CIA in your office and have a CIA officer on permanent detail. In other words, there is no reason for the Vice President to make personal visits to CIA analysts. According to the *Post*, your unprecedented visits created "an environment in which some analysts felt they were being pressured to make their assessments fit with the Bush administration's policy objectives."

On *'Meet the Press'* on Sunday September 14, 2003, you dismissed *The Washington Post* article by suggesting that your frequent trips to the CIA were because of a longtime interest of yours in the field of intelligence. You also denied that your visits to the CIA had any impact on the changing of intelligence:

"In terms of asking questions, I plead guilty. I ask a hell of a lot of questions. That's my job. I've had an interest in the intelligence area since I worked for Gerry Ford 30 years ago, served on the Intel Committee in the House for years in the '80s, ran a big part of the intelligence community when I was secretary of Defense in the early '90s...Shouldn't be any pressure. I can't think of a single instance. Maybe somebody can produce one. I'm unaware of anywhere the community changed a judgment that they made because I asked questions."

#### Questions:

- 1) How many visits did you and your chief of staff make to CIA to meet directly with CIA analysts working on Iraq ?
- 2) What was the purpose of each of these visits?
- 3) Did you ever meet with CIA analysts working on other intelligence matters, such as A I Qaeda?
- 4) Did you or a member of your staff at any time request or demand rewriting of intelligence assessments concerning the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq ?

II. Concerning a request by the Vice President to investigate intelligence of Niger uranium sale, revealing forgery one year ago.

This alleged sale of uranium to Iraq by Niger was critical to the administration's case that Iraq was reconstituting a nuclear weapons program. During the period of time you reportedly paid visits to CIA , you also requested that CIA investigate intelligence that purported to show Iraqi pursuit of uranium from Niger , and your office received a briefing on the investigation. According to *The New York Times* of May 6, 2003 , "more than a year ago the vice president's office asked for an investigation of the uranium deal, so a former U.S. Ambassador to Africa was dispatched to Niger ."

The ambassador "reported to the CIA and State Department that the information was unequivocally wrong and that the documents had been forged," according to the *Times*. Indeed, that former U.S. Ambassador, Joseph Wilson, wrote in *The New York Times*, July 6, 2003 , "The vice president's office asked a serious question. We were

asked to help formulate the answer. We did so, and we have every confidence that the answer we provided was circulated to the appropriate officials within our government."

Moreover, your chief of staff, Mr. Libby, told Time magazine this week that you did in fact express interest in the report to the CIA briefer. Our understanding is that Standard Operating Procedure is that if a principal asks about a report, he is given a specific answer.

On *Meet the Press* on Sunday September 14, 2003, contrary to Ambassador Wilson and Mr. Libby, you denied receiving Ambassador Wilson's findings in February, or March of 2002. You also denied sending Ambassador Wilson to look into the claim.

"I don't know Joe Wilson. I've never met Joe Wilson... I get a daily brief on my own each day before I meet with the president to go through the intel. And I ask lots of questions. One of the questions I asked at that particular time about this, I said, "What do we know about this?" They take the question. He came back within a day or two and said, "This is all we know. There's a lot we don't know," end of statement... And Joe Wilson -- I don't know who sent Joe Wilson."

Questions:

5) Who in the office of Vice President was informed of the contents of Ambassador Wilson's report?

6) When did you personally become informed of Ambassador Wilson's findings?

7) If the staff who took your question said, "This is all we know. There's a lot we don't know", why did you continue to use the shaky uranium claim in your public statements over the past year?

8) What efforts were made by your office to disseminate the findings of Ambassador Wilson's investigation to the President, National Security Adviser, and Secretary of Defense?

III. Speech by the Vice President to the American Enterprise Institute on July 25, 2003

In a speech to the American Enterprise Institute on July 25, 2003,

you read from several sections of the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE). You said that the Administration could not ignore the findings in the NIE because doing so would be irresponsible. You said:

Those charged with the security of this nation could not read such an assessment and pretend that it did not exist. Ignoring such information, or trying to wish it away, would be irresponsible in the extreme. And our President did not ignore that information -- he faced it... Against this background, to disregard the NIE's warnings would have been irresponsible in the extreme. And our President did not ignore that information -- he faced it, and acted to remove the danger.

You cited the following sections of NIE as findings the President could not ignore:

" Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons, as well as missiles with ranges in excess of U.N. restrictions. If left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade... Since inspections ended in 1998, Iraq has maintained its chemical weapons effort, energized its missile program, and invested more heavily in biological weapons; in the view of most agencies, Baghdad is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program... Iraq is continuing, and in some areas expanding, its chemical, biological, nuclear and missile programs contrary to U.N. Resolutions."

What is concerning about your speech is that in your attempt to legitimize the cause for war with Iraq , you cited intelligence listed in the National Intelligence Estimate that had already been refuted before you spoke. Even more disturbing is that it was your office, the Office of the Vice President, that learned of the false uranium story seven months before the NIE was written and issued in October 2002.

Furthermore, questions have been raised about the intent of the drafting of the NIE document. Former CIA -analyst Ray McGovern , in an article printed in *The Miami Herald* on August 8, 2003 wrote:

Start with the fact that there was no NIE before the decision for war last summer. Such decisions are supposed to be based on the conclusions of NIEs, not the other way around. This time the process was reversed... The marketing rollout for the war was keynoted by the vice president, who in a shrill speech on Aug. 26 charged, "Saddam

has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons." A NIE was then ordered up, essentially to support the extreme judgments voiced by Cheney, and its various drafts were used effectively to frighten members of Congress into voting to authorize war.

Because it appears as if the NIE may have been drafted so as to support certain claims for the war in Iraq , using it as a supporting document for intelligence that the President "could not ignore" is misleading and irresponsible.

9) Since your address to the AEI was delivered several months after the nuclear uranium claim had been disputed, on what basis did you make the claim that the President "could not ignore" the false nuclear findings in the NIE?

IV. Assertions by the Vice President and other high-ranking members of the Administration claiming Iraqi nuclear weapons program.

The President's erroneous reference to the faked Niger uranium sale in his State of the Union address was only one example of a pattern of similar assertions by high-ranking members of the administration, including you. The assertion was made repeatedly in the administration's campaign to win congressional approval of military action against Iraq .

For instance, you said to the 103d National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on August 26, 2002, "they [the Iraqi regime] continue to pursue the nuclear program they began so many years ago... we now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons... Should all his ambitions be realized... [he could] subject the United States or any other nation to nuclear blackmail."

In sworn testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, just weeks before the House of Representatives voted to authorize military action against Iraq , Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld testified on September 18, 2002 :

"He [Saddam]... is pursuing nuclear weapons. If he demonstrates the capability to deliver them to our shores, the world would be changed. Our people would be at great risk. Our willingness to be

engaged in the world, our willingness to project power to stop aggression, our ability to forge coalitions for multilateral action, could all be under question. And many lives could be lost."

Questions:

10) Since your address to the VFW occurred nearly 7 months after Ambassador Wilson reported his findings to the CIA and State Department, what evidence did you have for the assertion that Iraq was continuing "to pursue the nuclear program" and that Saddam had "resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons"?

11) Since the Secretary of Defense testified to Congress that Iraq was "pursuing nuclear weapons" nearly 8 months after Ambassador Wilson's briefing to CIA and the State Department, what effort did you make to determine what evidence the Secretary of Defense had for his assertion to Congress?

Further refutation of the authenticity of the forged Niger documents came from IAEA Director General ElBaradei, when he reported to the U. N. Security Council on March 7, 2003 : "These documents, which formed the basis for reports of recent uranium transactions between Iraq and Niger , are in fact not authentic. We have therefore concluded that these specific allegations are unfounded... we have found no evidence or plausible indication of the revival of a nuclear weapons programme in Iraq ." Yet on March 16 -- nine days afterwards -- you again repeated the unfounded assertion on national television (*Meet the Press*, Sunday, March 16, 2003 ). You said:

"We think Mr. ElBaradei frankly is wrong," and "We believe [Saddam] has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons."

On September 14, 2003 , after almost a year of repeating the nuclear claim, you finally retracted your position on Iraq's nuclear capabilities when you appeared on *Meet the Press*. When asked about your March 16, 2003 *Meet the Press* interview in which you accused Mohammed ElBaradei of being wrong about Iraq not having reconstituted its nuclear weapons program, you said:

"Yeah. I did misspeak. I said repeatedly during the show weapons capability. We never had any evidence that he had acquired a nuclear weapon."

Question:

12) What accounts for the length of time it took you to publicly retract the Niger uranium claim?

We hope you will take the opportunity to answer these questions about your role in the dissemination of false information about Iraq 's nuclear program to justify the war in Iraq. We look forward to a response.

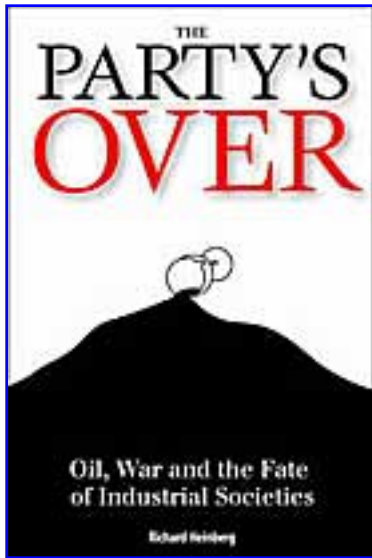
Sincerely,

Dennis J. Kucinich  
Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on National Security,  
Emerging Threats and  
International Relations

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member  
Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on National Security,  
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Bernie Sanders  
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