

You have to ask yourself why, after being so loquacious about this for 2 years, now they do not want to talk about it. Well, I think it is understandable when you think about it.

Think about this: Mr. McClellan told the American people that the President knows that the Deputy Chief of Staff was not involved in this, that it was ridiculous. The Deputy Chief of Staff says, no, I was not involved in this. The President of the United States says, no, he was not involved in this, and people who were, we would fire them.

Now, you take those three individuals, somebody is not telling the truth. Somebody is not being entirely candid with the American people. The Deputy Chief of Staff is not being candid with the President, perhaps, or the Deputy Chief of Staff is not being candid with the press secretary, perhaps, or the press secretary is not being candid with the American people, perhaps. There is a third possibility, and I am not even going to suggest it on the floor of this House. But somebody is not being candid with the American people about why an American was punished for doing his duty when he was asked to go to Niger.

I mean, you think about that. You imagine if the Federal Government tomorrow called you and said, I have this tough task. I want you to go to Africa where it is dusty and hot and a big day is when you get some sugar in your tea, and I want you to find out if there is yellow cake there because we are trying to decide whether to start a war or not. It is a big, big deal. And you go there, essentially out of retirement, and you bring back the truthful answer, and you give it to the administration. They then ignore your conclusion and put it in the State of the Union address anyway, a war is talked about to be started; you have the guts enough to write an op-ed in *The New York Times* telling America what you concluded, and, all of a sudden, the entire Federal Government comes after you and destroys your wife's career. That should not happen to any American of any political persuasion. And that principle is an important one.

This is not the only time this has happened in America. You recall back in the Vietnam era where there was an author who was critical of President Nixon's war in Vietnam, Daniel Ellsberg; and he published in *The New York Times* some information that was critical of the President. So what did the President do? Did he thank him for sharing this information with the public? No. He had people burglarize Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office in order to get information to destroy Daniel Ellsberg's credibility. That President tried to destroy their critic's credibility, and that is what happened here. A different way, a different strategy, a different effort, same goal: punish critics of the administration.

We went through a Revolutionary War to get rid of King George because we believed citizens rule the country

and when citizens exercise their right of free speech and they tell the truth, nobody here in Washington, D.C. ought to be able to punish them. It was a principle worth going to the Revolutionary War about it. And in a small way, we are fighting it right here: that if you are a citizen and you tell the truth, nobody should be able to punish you, even the most powerful person in America. That is why we are filing this resolution of inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT), who has provided great leadership and who was working on this subject last year to try to bring to the attention of the country this issue. He has shown a lot of courage on this. I thank the gentleman for joining us today.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, my friend from Washington, for this Special Order and for shining a light on this subject. The gentleman is right, this is something, it is curious. I have been trying for a couple of years to draw sharp attention to this, to this exposure of the identity of someone whom we have asked to undertake risky, dangerous, important assignments for quite a long time.

The press seemed very interested in this other issue of their ability to protect their sources, not an unimportant issue, but something apart from this critical issue of how we as a country collect intelligence, what we as a country ask of people who risk their lives to collect that intelligence, and what we do about protecting their ability to do it and protecting their lives and welfare.

This is a very important matter. Former President Bush, the current President's father, said that those who expose our human sources are "the most insidious of traitors." Ten former intelligence officers signed a letter calling the disclosure of this particular officer's identity "a shameful and unprecedented event in American history." It is an uncommon occurrence, and for good reason. Thank goodness, it is uncommon.

Intelligence is intended to save lives. Intelligence is intended to protect our national security. Intelligence is intended to be something that prevents us from going to war. But to collect that intelligence, people have to take great risks. Operating undercover, perhaps under an alias, dealing with people in out-of-the-way places is often a thankless job. We do not often acknowledge the people who do that. It is a terrible thing when their effectiveness is lost through some accident. It is even worse when they are exposed by the counterintelligence people in another country.

But worst of all, of almost unthinkable tragedy, is when a person would be exposed by his or her own government. Mr. Speaker, it is not just a matter of ruining a career, it is not just a matter of an affront to a person or her spouse, it is not just the loss of probably mil-

lions of dollars that goes into developing an undercover agent, providing the cover and all that.

No, it is more than the ruined career, more than the loss to our Nation of effective intelligence. It actually puts that person at risk. And anyone who ever had lunch with that person in a foreign country is now suspected by that country as having been fraternizing with a spy. We do not know what has happened to other people in other countries because of exposure of identities of intelligence officers. That an exposure should come from our own country is almost unthinkable.

So when we raise this subject today, it is not about political "gotcha"; it is not to embarrass someone. No. It is because we as a Congress have a responsibility to look after these people whom we have asked to take great risks. And we have to make sure that this sort of thing does not happen. That is why we want to know what happened and how it happened. It is, well, like someone sending an e-mail to the enemy with a position of our troops on the map. You do not do that at wartime. That is treasonous.

Today, the members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on which I sit submitted a letter to the President, again underscoring the importance of this matter, abhorring the disclosure of identities of undercover officers, and asking that the President take the step of removing the security clearance from anyone known to have any association with this. We certainly know that Karl Rove, as acknowledged through his attorney, that he disclosed the identity, maybe not by name, but he might as well have; the identity of an intelligence officer to a reporter of a national news magazine.

Because the officer was undercover, her identity could be known only through access to classified information. There is ample precedent for suspending the security clearances of people under suspicion of leaking classified information. So we formally and soberly asked the President to suspend any and all of Mr. Rove's security clearances, at least and until the Fitzgerald investigation is complete. That is just one step.

But we here in Congress have an important role beyond that, a role of oversight to make sure that we, as I say, look after the welfare, effectiveness, and safety of those whom we have asked to take risks for our country so that we can know what is going on around the world, so we can avoid war, so that we can save lives, so that we can advance democracy.

I thank my colleague from Washington for this Special Order; and I hope, now that the country's attention is focused on this subject, that we really can get to the bottom of it. The President said at first that he would find and fire this person. Then a little bit later he said, you know, it is going to be really hard to find the person.

This is the same President who said we will find Osama bin Laden, wherever he is in the world. But among the 5,000 people in the White House, I am going to have a hard time finding out who it was who leaked this. Well, we know at least one person in the White House now who was party to this. The President should take action so that this sort of thing will never happen again.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey. I have to say, one of the troublesome things to me now that this disclosure has come up, here the person, at least one, there might be more people who are responsible for this besides the Deputy Chief of Staff; there may be more than one, but at least one was a person who talks to the President at least several times a day. I cannot understand when this came out why the President did not demand his inner circle to give him an affidavit saying they were not involved in this, and get to the heart of this.

Instead, the President of the United States, who works across the desk from the gentleman who is at least one of the people responsible for this leak, the most powerful man in the world could not get a straight answer. Now, if he did not get a straight answer on this important thing, then the President should exercise what he promised the American people he would do, which is to send that person on to other pursuits, and we will see whether the President meant what he said in that regard shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman and mention one other thing and ask for his response. There is one other excuse that we are hearing floated about this today, and I have heard some people defending the White House saying, well, this was not really that big of a deal. We might have said there was yellow cake in there anyway, because we really did not know; we would have thrown that up in the State of the Union address anyway.

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So no harm, no foul. I want to read something that Secretary of State Rice said on July 26, 2003, "My only point is that in retrospect, knowing that some of the documents underneath may have been, were indeed forgeries, and knowing that apparently there were concerns swirling around about this, had we known that at the time, we would not have put it in. And if there had been even a peep that the Agency did not want that sentence, or that George Tenet did not want that sentence in, that the Director of Central Intelligence did not want it in, it would not have been done."

Here we have the person sent by the CIA to get this information, reported back these were forgeries, reporting back it is highly unlikely there is yellow cake there, but the President put it in anyway, and then Secretary Rice was candid.

She said we should not have put that in. So let us not let this sort of octopus

defense of squirting ink around this thing obscure a central truth. The President gave false information to the American people, and for one reason or the another did not report what his own agent, the CIA, had sent, and then his administration punished that person.

This cries out for action by Congress.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I would say this goes beyond political punishment. We certainly could condemn his punishing the envoy who went to learn the truth about the uranium from Niger. But for whatever reason to disclose the identity of someone whom we have asked to take risks, life and death risks on our behalf is almost unthinkable.

And to do it for what appear to be gratuitous political reasons makes it all the more shameful.

Mr. INSLEE. Would it be fair to say that if these assertions are true, someone put political convenience ahead of national security? I will make that a rhetorical question.

Mr. HOLT. I cannot imagine why this name would have been released, but for the sake of creating political embarrassment for someone. I call that a gratuitous breach of national security.

There does not seem to be any higher purpose here. I suppose you might be able to imagine some circumstances where for some higher purpose you probably could dream up something where releasing the identity of, you know, someone we have put in such a dangerous position might be justifiable, but this certainly is not it.

Mr. INSLEE. Well, we would stand for the proposition that political pettiness does not justify a breach of national security. I hope we can have bipartisan consensus on that.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY).

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank very much the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) for bringing this issue to the floor of the House. I think it is at the moment one of the most important issues that this Congress should be dealing with, but is not doing so.

As you pointed out, there is a great deal of dissembling going on within the context of the Bush Administration. And one of the principal people responsible for that is Mr. Rove. It is quite clear that he revealed the identity of Valerie Plame, Central Intelligence Agency operative, and the wife of Ambassador Wilson, to at least one reporter, in this particular case a reporter for Time Magazine, and that he did so in the context of e-mail.

But it is also very likely that he made that revelation not just to the reporter for Time Magazine, but to others as well. And it may very well have been Mr. Rove who made that revelation to Robert Novak, who was the columnist who published her name and made the revelation that someone working for the intelligence agency in a very sensitive position now had that

name made public, putting that person in danger.

So the question of the motivation here is one that is very important. It is quite clear that at least on one level, the motivation was to exact retribution against Ambassador Wilson, who you have pointed out rightly was sent by the Central Intelligence Agency to Niger to investigate the question as to whether or not enriched yellow cake uranium was being transported from Niger into Iraq.

The President of the United States in this room, in an address to a joint session of the Congress of the United States, and to the American people, made the assertion that enriched yellow cake uranium was being imported from Niger into Iraq, and that created the prospect that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons.

On numerous occasions, the President, the Vice President, the National Security Advisor, and others in the administration, used the illustration of the mushroom cloud in reference to Iraq, to create the impression that Iraq was developing a nuclear weapon.

Ambassador Wilson, in the context of his trip to Niger, made it very clear that no yellow cake uranium had been transported from Niger to Iraq. Nevertheless, the administration continued to allege that that is not the case, and that Iraq was engaged in a program to develop a nuclear weapon.

So what we see here in the course of this discussion this afternoon is another example of the dissembling, the misuse of information by important people within this administration. And from our point of view, as Members of the House of Representatives, one of the critical aspects of all of this is the failure of this House to address this circumstance.

We know that the allegations made by the administration with regard to the connection between Iraq and the attack of September 11 were untrue. We know that the allegations concerning the relationship between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden were not true. We know that the allegations with regard to weapons of mass destruction, including the prospects of a nuclear weapon, were untrue.

Why is it that this House of Representatives is not carrying out its responsibilities under the Constitution to conduct an investigation and to hold Congressional hearings with regard to this issue?

Mr. INSLEE. I think you bring a very good point about Congress's obligation to investigate the executive branch. We do have a checks-and-balances system here. I think that is very important in this case, because essentially the President has said, as he said yesterday, look, this is a criminal investigation, so I have no responsibility whatsoever, he implied this, to find out what happened here.

He says, you know, there is a prosecutor here, so I have no responsibility to find out if people who work literally