

**Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing  
Friday, October 24, 2003  
Mansfield Room (S-207), U.S. Capitol  
10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

**“National Security Implications of Disclosing the Identity  
of an Intelligence Operative”**

According to syndicated columnist Robert Novak, two “senior administration officials” told him in July that Valerie Plame, the wife of former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, was a CIA operative. This Bush Administration leak, which is being investigated as a possible criminal violation, has serious national security implications.

The Senate Democratic Policy Committee has convened this hearing to examine the damage that may have been done to our national security as a result of the leak. Senators will hear from three witnesses: Vincent Cannistraro, Larry Johnson, and James Marcinkowski. All three of the witnesses are former CIA officers who will testify about the need to protect national security assets and intelligence information.

**Opening Statements**

**10:30 - 10:45 a.m.**

Senator Daschle

Senator Rockefeller

Senator Levin

Senator Harkin

Senator Graham

Senator Lautenberg

**Statements by Witnesses**

**10:45 - 11:00 a.m.**

Vincent Cannistraro, former Chief of Operations and Analysis at the  
CIA Counterterrorism Center

Larry Johnson, former CIA Analyst

James Marcinkowski, former CIA Operations Officer

**Questions and Answers**

**11:00 – 11:30 a.m.**

## **Witness Biographies**

### **VINCENT CANNISTRARO**

Vincent Cannistraro is a consultant on intelligence and terrorism for ABC World News with Peter Jennings and other corporate clients. He is a recognized expert on political violence and national security issues and has been a consultant to the Vatican on security affairs. Mr. Cannistraro is a former Chief of Operations and Analysis at the CIA's Counterterrorism Center. Prior to this, he worked at the Department of Defense where he was Special Assistant for Intelligence in the office of the Secretary of Defense (January 1987-October 1988). From November 1984 to January 1987 he was Director for Intelligence Programs at the National Security Council under President Reagan. Before 1984, he served as a clandestine CIA officer in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. In 1989, Mr. Cannistraro received the Secretary of Defense's Medal for Meritorious Civilian Service. He was also awarded the CIA Medal for Distinguished Service. He has a B.A. and M.A. from Boston College.

### **LARRY JOHNSON**

Larry Johnson is CEO and co-founder of BERG Associates, LLC, an international business consulting firm that helps multinational corporations and financial institutions identify strategic opportunities, manage risks, and counter threats posed by terrorism and money laundering. Mr. Johnson, who worked previously with the Central Intelligence Agency and U.S. State Department's Office of Counter Terrorism, is a recognized expert in the fields of terrorism, aviation security, crisis and risk management. From 1989 until October 1993, he served as a Deputy Director in the U.S. State Department's Office of Counter Terrorism. From 1985 through September 1989, Mr. Johnson worked for the CIA and in his final year with the CIA he received two Exceptional Performance Awards. Mr. Johnson taught at the American University's School of International Service (1979-1983) while working on a Ph.D. in political science. He received his M.S. in Community Development in 1978 and B.S. degree in Sociology in 1978, both from the University of Missouri.

### **JAMES MARCINKOWSKI**

James Marcinkowski has been the Deputy City Attorney in supervision of criminal prosecution in the Royal Oak City Attorney's office since 1996. He was the Assistant Deputy City Attorney, also for the City of Royal Oak, though he maintained a private practice, specializing in criminal defense and as a General Counsel to Financial (Mortgage) Institution, from 1993 to 1997. Mr. Marcinkowski has also worked in the Computer Systems Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1974 to 1975, as an operations specialist for the United States Navy from 1975 to 1980, as a prosecutor intern in the St. Clair County Prosecutor's Office from 1984 to 1985, as Operations

Officer for the Central Intelligence Agency from 1985 to 1989, and Executive Staff Attorney in the Oakland County Prosecutor's office in Michigan from 1989 to 1993. He received his B.A. in Political Science at Michigan State University in 1982 and his J.D. from the University of Detroit School of Law in 1985. He has been a member of the Michigan Bar Association since 1985. He has also been a member of the Prosecuting Attorney's Association of Michigan and the National District Attorney's Association from 1989 to 1993.

## Witness Testimony

### VINCENT CANNISTRARO

In order to understand the deliberate leaking of Valerie Plame's identity as a clandestine officer of the Central Intelligence Agency it is necessary to understand the environment in which senior Administration officials acted. The leaking was, in my judgment, a manifestation of the continuing battle by some policy-makers to pressure the intelligence community into providing the intelligence data that would support previously adopted objectives. Some senior officials have contempt for the professional intelligence community, including CIA and DIA. This contempt has been manifested by attempted intimidation of analysts to produce supporting data for the policy-makers' own ideological beliefs. This disdain for the intelligence community led to dependence by policy makers on dubious channels of information such as the defector sources produced by Ahmad Chalabi and the INC. This channel fostered the original belief that Saddam Hussein had renewed his nuclear program and was close to obtaining a nuclear device. The intelligence community estimate was that it would require several years to produce such a device, but a much shorter period if Saddam were able to acquire weapons-grade uranium.

The dispute about the nuclear weapons scenario bubbled up as a major issue in late 2001 when CIA and the British MI-6 were separately provided intelligence analysis from the Italian military intelligence service (SISMI) stating that the Ba'athi regime was seeking uranium in Africa. American Intelligence analysts were apparently dubious about the report given that the I.A.E.A. had in 1997 inventoried over 15 tons of uranium ore stored in Iraq. The question was asked why the Ba'athis were seeking more uranium when they already had a stockpile and still had no capability of refining and enriching the uranium. But there were no intelligence data to contradict the Italian report.

The Vice President and his chief of staff Lewis Libby visited CIA headquarters to engage the CIA analysts directly on this issue of uranium acquisition in Africa and the alleged renewal of a nuclear program. I have heard that this unprecedented act, in which a Vice President engages desk level analysts, resulted in a contentious give and take. The analysts maintained their position that there were no supporting intelligence data for the Italian report. The Vice President, who had publicly asserted the uranium story as proof Saddam was acquiring nuclear weapons, insisted that CIA analysts were not looking hard enough for the evidence. As a result of this pressure, CIA's Non-Proliferation Center sent Joe Wilson to Niger for a fact-finding trip. As we know, there was no evidence obtained by Ambassador Wilson, or any other fact-finder, to support the Italian report. In fact, further investigation resulted in the CIA acquisition of documents on which the Italian report was based. The British reporting, making the same assertions about yellowcake acquisition attempts, was apparently based on the same document foundation. These documents were crude forgeries.

Officials in the Vice President's office were obviously not pleased with the trip report of

Wilson's fact-finding mission but these officials did not alter their views about a renewed nuclear program despite CIA findings. Indeed, the Vice President reiterated the claims publicly. According to testimony provided by the head of the NPC to the Senate Intelligence Committee, his efforts with the NSC arguing against the inclusion of the uranium claim in the State of the Union Address were to no avail. Memoranda to the Deputy NSC Chief from the CIA Director saying there was no intelligence evidence for the claim were ignored. The infamous sixteen words were included in the President's speech. When Ambassador Wilson went public with his Op-Ed piece in the New York Times (after several media reports about the uranium acquisition report being unfounded) the leaks from the White House began with the evident intent of politically trashing Joe Wilson. But the leakers were unable to restrain their underlying contempt for the CIA and exposed the identity of Wilson's wife, implying that as a specialist in WMD at the Agency she was already opposed to the reporting that an Iraqi nuclear program was in process. There was also the suggestion of nepotism, as if traveling to Niger was some sort of boondoggle. Again, Valerie Plame was collateral damage to the leakers who were intent on destroying the credibility of anyone who doubted the Italian military intelligence report, a report we now know is based on a fabrication and for which there was and is no independent verification.

The revelation of Plame's professional affiliation, which is being investigated as a criminal violation of the Identities Act, was a purely vindictive act that was not germane to the apparent political purpose of attacking former Ambassador Joseph Wilson and the results of his fact-finding visit to Niger. In pursuing a political agenda, the leakers destroyed a woman's chosen career path without regard for the consequences. But the consequences are much greater than Valerie's job as a clandestine CIA employee – they include the damage to the lives and livelihoods of many foreign nationals with whom she was connected and it has destroyed a clandestine cover mechanism that may have been used to protect other CIA non-official cover officers.

## **LARRY JOHNSON**

(with Michael Grimaldi and Brent Cavan)

I appreciate the chance to appear before the Democratic Policy Committee today to discuss the outing of a clandestine officer of the Central Intelligence Agency by two officials in the Bush Administration. Who those people are remains unknown but there is no dispute that columnist Robert Novak cited Bush officials as his sources. You will notice my statement carries the names of Michael Grimaldi and Brent Cavan. They cannot appear today but share the sentiments and views expressed in this statement. We all served with the wife of Ambassador Joseph Wilson and are outraged by the irresponsible actions of two people in the Bush Administration.

We slogged through the same swamps on patrols, passed clandestine messages to our agents during exercises, survived a simulated terrorist kidnapping and interrogation, kicked pallets from cargo planes, completed parachute jumps, and literally helped pick ticks off each other after weeks in the woods at a CIA training facility. We knew each other's secrets. We shared our fears, failures, and successes. We came to rely on each other in a way you do not find in normal civilian life. We understood that a slip of the tongue could end in death for those close to us or for people we didn't even know. We were trained by the best, to be the best. We were trained by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Even our Agency trainers may not fully appreciate what they created some eighteen years ago. Our joint training experience forged a bond of trust and a sense of duty. It is because of this bond of trust that we and two other colleagues, all former intelligence officers, appeared on ABC's Nightline to speak out on behalf of the wife of Ambassador Joseph Wilson, a sensitive undercover operative outed by columnist Robert Novak. The Ambassador's wife (we decline to use her name here) is a friend who went through the same Agency training with us. We acknowledge our continued obligation after all these years to protect each other and the intelligence community and the information we used to do our jobs (largely because we have friends, like Mrs. Wilson, who continue to serve). We are speaking out because someone in the Bush Administration seemingly does not understand this, although they signed the same oaths of allegiance and confidentiality that we did.

Many of us have moved on into the private sector, where this Agency aspect of our lives means little, but we have not forgotten our initial oaths to support the Constitution, our government, and to protect the secrets we learned and to protect each other. We still have friends who serve overseas. We protect them literally by keeping our mouths shut unless we are speaking amongst ourselves. We understand what this bond or the lack of it means.

Clearly some in the Bush Administration do not understand the requirement to protect and shield national security assets. Based on published information, we can only conclude that partisan politics was perceived as more important by staff in the Bush Administration. Someone or some few set aside their moral and legal obligations to

protect clandestine officers and security assets to pursue political retribution.

We're testifying to offer Mrs. Wilson our moral support and our prayers for her safety and her future. We also want to send a clear message to the political "operatives" responsible for "outing" Mrs. Wilson. Such action was treacherous, if not treasonous. Such action was taken with utter disregard for the dangerous times in which we all live. Such action has allowed the less attractive aspects of politics to supercede the Government's responsibility to protect the citizens of this nation and the individuals who serve in difficult, dangerous covert capacities.

This has set a sickening precedent. The "senior Administration officials" who did this have warned all U.S. intelligence officers and the Intelligence Community that any one individual may be compromised if providing information or factual analysis the White House does not like. A precedent, as one colleague pointed out during our brief television appearances, allows you to build a case based on previous legal actions and court decisions. It's a slippery slope if it lowers the bar.

Ambassador Wilson's views on Iraq or his political affiliations are irrelevant. Political differences serve as the basis for the give and take of representative government. He is a private citizen and can say what he likes. What is relevant is the damage caused by the exposure of Ambassador Wilson's wife as a covert CIA intelligence officer. This was a deliberate political act intended to exact retribution for Wilson's public expression of his views.

It is shameful on one level that the White House uses the news media to levy attacks on Ambassador Wilson. But the attacks go beyond the White House. We also have seen craven partisan proxies, a junior Congressman from Georgia for example, used to continue the assault. The efforts to discredit Ambassador Wilson have included questioning his competence to conduct an investigation in Niger and suggesting that his wife's covert status is of little value because she was "a low-level CIA employee". If Wilson's comments or analysis have no merit, why does the White House feel the need to launch such a coordinated attack? Why drag his wife and family into it? Why rationalize "low-level CIA employees" as unimportant?

The Intelligence Community must be shielded from politicization. The outing of Mrs. Wilson's true identity is an unfortunate symptom of the poisonous partisan politics that have infected Washington. Both Democrats and Republicans share responsibility for this mess. On the one hand we have seen judges nominated by President Bush, who have the approval of the American Bar Association, vilified as extremists by Democrats because they oppose abortion. On the other hand we have seen Republicans attack Ambassador Wilson and his wife because they made campaign contributions to Al Gore. The tit for tat must stop.

Beyond damaging the career of our colleague, the unnamed sources for this leak have put many other people potentially in harm's way. Other clandestine officers may have been protected by the same front company used by Mrs. Wilson. Foreign sources of

information, i.e. spies and unwitting foreigners who met with Mrs. Wilson could also be at risk. Many foreign intelligence services use incarceration, torture, and murder to great advantage in finding out what they want to know. If left unpunished, this cowardly act will not only hinder our efforts to recruit qualified individuals into the clandestine service, but it will have a far-reaching, deleterious effect on our ability to recruit foreign intelligence assets overseas. Who in their right mind would ever agree to become a spy for the United States when we cannot even protect our own undercover officers? If we will not protect our own people how can we reassure foreigners that we will safeguard them?

Republicans and Democrats agree that better human intelligence is vital to prevent future terror incidents. The goal of gathering better human intelligence will never be achieved, unless incidents like this are dealt with firmly and decisively.

We believe that President Bush has been a decisive leader in the war on terrorism. We believe that Congress has been a constructive collaborator of the President in that war. The outing of our colleague confronts both the President and the Congress with a choice. To sit by passively doing nothing or to make a strong, bipartisan declaration that national security and intelligence matters must be kept out of the muddy waters of politics. While the FBI investigation and Justice Department prosecution is the right path to take in seeking the truth behind this leak, the President must do more to ensure that his immediate staff and advisors get the message. It is up to the President to restore the bonds of trust with the Intelligence Community and the "low-level employees" who do the work of human intelligence gathering.

We joined the CIA to protect our country from foreign countries, tyrants, and terrorists who use torture and murder to achieve their ends. They followed the rule of force, not the rule of law. We now find ourselves with an administration in the United States where some of its members have chosen to act as tyrants. As loyal Americans and registered Republicans we implore President Bush to move quickly and decisively against those who, if not apprehended, will leave his Administration with the legacy of being the first to allow political operatives to betray the public trust.

## **JAMES MARCINKOWSKI**

Good morning. I am Jim Marcinkowski. It is an honor to appear before this Committee and I want to thank all of the members for making this effort, especially in a time, as described by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, where “we have entered what may very well prove to be the most dangerous security environment the world has known.” It is because of the danger of these times that the unprecedented exposure of a clandestine intelligence officer is so detrimental to our intelligence capabilities and national security.

I would like to address two separate issues, first, the unprecedented act of exposing a clandestine intelligence officer and the consequential damages, and second, the myths reported in the media that tend to downplay the seriousness of this event.

To my knowledge, the United States government has never before released the name of a clandestine officer. Until recently, there was never even a question that such an outrageous act would unequivocally cause immediate danger and damage to our national security.

Many of us who have spoken publicly in outrage over this incident were classmates of Ambassador Wilson’s wife.

The vitally important message I bring to you this morning is simple yet devastating. My classmates and I have been betrayed. Together, we have kept the secret of each other’s identities for over eighteen years. Each and every one of us have kept that secret, whether we were in the CIA, in other government service, or in the private sector.

This issue is not just about a blown cover. It is about the destruction of the very essence, the core, of human intelligence collection activities – plausible deniability – apparently for partisan domestic political reasons. There are only two entities that can definitively identify a clandestine officer, the officer himself or herself, and the government that employs them. When operating overseas or even working in the U.S., the cover of the majority of CIA employees may be a mere “fig leaf.” Someone may suspect or presume that a particular person is a CIA officer, but that officer still has the ability to deny it. Plausible deniability, combined with the personal skills of the individual officer, provides the security for the officer and all of his or her contacts. Blown cover probably happens more than anyone would like. The deliberate exposure and identification of Ambassador Wilson’s wife, by our own government, was unprecedented, unnecessary, harmful and dangerous.

While there may be a damage assessment conducted specific to this case, there is a host of incalculable damage that flows from this exposure:

- damage to our ability to assuage the security concerns and personal safety of our current and potential agents overseas;
- damage to our reputation to maintain confidentiality with friendly foreign

governments who share intelligence with the United States;

- damage to our image in attracting our own talented young people who may be contemplating working for the CIA;
- damage to the credibility of this country's efforts to safeguard the wellbeing of its own citizens; and
- perhaps striking at the heart of the matter, regardless whether this incident falls within the purview of the criminal law, what moral message has now been sent as how this government will respond to the misdeeds of the keepers of the public trust?

Second, the arguments being made in the media in an apparent attempt to downplay the effects of this incident demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of undercover operations.

It defies logic to pretend that anyone involved in this exposure did not know they were dealing with someone who was an employee of the CIA, which is by definition, a spy agency. To have any effectiveness, the agency relies upon secrecy. Not even the janitor at the agency should report that he or she works for the CIA since that would, or could, make that person a target of a hostile intelligence agency.

It has been reported that Ambassador Wilson's wife's status as a CIA employee was not important to the initial story. If the identity wasn't important, then why was that information in the story? The disclosure of the identity was evidently newsworthy since it was included in the story that was reported by the national media. The disclosure of the identity must have been important to the motive of the story since the disclosure was highlighted and given additional credence and buttressed by the notation that the status of Ambassador Wilson's wife was known to "senior officials." One can assume that most people do not think that "senior officials" are familiar with the clerical staff at the CIA. Therefore the agent known to the "senior officials" is implicated as an important, and therefore knowledgeable, person. The agent's identity was obviously included to give the entire report more credibility and to maximize the effect of the other information in the story.

It has been reported that the release of this officer's identity was not deliberate. How can anyone even pretend that the disclosure of a CIA employee's identity to a reporter could be done by accident? The fact is that the release of this information by "senior officials" was deliberate and done for a purpose. It is equally clear that the purpose of these "senior officials" was certainly not to advance the national security of the United States. Reasonable minds cannot differ as to the deliberate nature of this action by these "senior officials." (Anyone who would care to try to portray this action as merely negligent, as opposed to deliberate, should also be prepared to explain how anyone so completely inept as to divulge this information by accident ever became a "senior official" in any organization, let alone an organization running the country.)

It must be assumed that “senior administration officials” would have at least a rudimentary working knowledge of the media, an understanding of what is “on” or “off the record,” what information is “on background,” and so forth. The fact that such basic ground rules, if you will, were not used to protect the identity of Ambassador Wilson’s wife exceeds any reasonable definition of gross negligence. This disclosure was not an accident, it was a cynical effort to advance an interest deemed so important by these “senior officials” as to potentially place lives at risk. The interest being advanced by this disclosure was certainly not national security.

Somehow the issue of disclosing the names of intelligence workers must be addressed and it must be resolved. This Congress has appropriated billions of dollars for use in enhancing the security of this nation’s homeland. National security is the primary purpose of the government. Intelligence gathering regarding foreign threats has been highlighted as a continuing national priority. Living, breathing Americans, and the foreign nationals they are able to recruit, gathering information, piece by piece, are essential to the security of the United States.

The intelligence community was roundly criticized after September 11 as having let the country down. I am certain that every single person working for the CIA re-doubled his or her commitment to superior performance and service on behalf of this country on September 11. To perform well, to do the job of enhancing this country’s security, requires that the entire government work as a team with a shared goal and with a clear understanding of the risks that face the country and those intelligence officers committed to protecting this country.

Obviously, these “senior officials” lacked that clear understanding. The harm, short and longer term, created by these “senior officials” callous and complete and total disregard for the health, welfare and safety of intelligence employees and their foreign contacts cannot be overstated. I am speaking out to highlight this problem when others are not able to do so. I can tell you that I am certain that intelligence officers and their contacts the world over are looking to see what the solution to this problem will be.

The only adequate solution will require the resolve to create both a short- and long-term situation that results in rebuilding and restoring the level of confidence needed by our people in the field to perform the job they are so willing to do. One of the tools required to do the job in the field has just been severely compromised by these “senior administration officials.” The people in the field, if they could be here, would ask that you fashion a response that would be sufficient to restore your own confidence if you were at risk while working in the field to protect this country. Anything less decreases our ability to protect and to defend ourselves - that cannot be acceptable.