

18 July 2005

AN OPEN STATEMENT TO THE LEADERS OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SENATE.

The Honorable Dennis Hastert, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Dr. William Frist, Majority Leader of the Senate
The Honorable Harry Reid, Minority Leader of the Senate

We, the undersigned former U.S. intelligence officers are concerned with the tone and substance of the public debate over the ongoing Department of Justice investigation into who leaked the name of Valerie Plame, wife of former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Wilson IV, to syndicated columnist Robert Novak and other members of the media, which exposed her status as an undercover CIA officer. The disclosure of Ms. Plame's name was a shameful event in American history and, in our professional judgment, may have damaged U.S. national security and poses a threat to the ability of U.S. intelligence gathering using human sources. Any breach of the code of confidentiality and cover weakens the overall fabric of intelligence, and, directly or indirectly, jeopardizes the work and safety of intelligence workers and their sources.

The Republican National Committee has circulated talking points to supporters to use as part of a coordinated strategy to discredit Ambassador Joseph Wilson and his wife. As part of this campaign a common theme is the idea that Ambassador Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame was not undercover and deserved no protection. The following are four recent examples of this "talking point":

Michael Medved stated on Larry King Live on July 12, 2005, ***"And let's be honest about this. Mrs. Plame, Mrs. Wilson, had a desk job at Langley. She went back and forth every single day."***

Victoria Toensing stated on a Fox News program with John Gibson on July 12, 2005 that, ***"Well, they weren't taking affirmative measures to protect that identity. They gave her a desk job in Langley. You don't really have somebody deep undercover going back and forth to Langley, where people can see them."***

Ed Rodgers, Washington Lobbyist and former Republican official, said on July 13, 2005 on the Newshour with Jim Lehrer, ***"And also I think***

it is now a matter of established fact that Mrs. Plame was not a protected covert agent, and I don't think there's any meaningful investigation about that."

House majority whip Roy Blunt (R, Mo), on Face the Nation, July 17, 2005, ***"It certainly wouldn't be the first time that the CIA might have been overzealous in sort of maintaining the kind of top-secret definition on things longer than they needed to. You know, this was a job that the ambassador's wife had that she went to every day. It was a desk job. I think many people in Washington understood that her employment was at the CIA, and she went to that office every day."***

These comments reveal an astonishing ignorance of the intelligence community and the role of cover. The fact is that there are thousands of U.S. intelligence officers who "work at a desk" in the Washington, D.C. area every day who are undercover. Some have official cover, and some have non-official cover. Both classes of cover must and should be protected.

While we are pleased that the U.S. Department of Justice is conducting an investigation and that the U.S. Attorney General has recused himself, we believe that the partisan attacks against Valerie Plame are sending a deeply discouraging message to the men and women who have agreed to work undercover for their nation's security.

We are not lawyers and are not qualified to determine whether the leakers technically violated the 1982 Intelligence Identities Protection Act. However, we are confident that Valerie Plame was working in a cover status and that our nation's leaders, regardless of political party, have a duty to protect all intelligence officers. We believe it is appropriate for the President to move proactively to dismiss from office or administratively punish any official who participated in any way in revealing Valerie Plame's status. Such an act by the President would send an unambiguous message that leaks of this nature will not be tolerated and would be consistent with his duties as the Commander-in-Chief.

We also believe it is important that Congress speak with one non-partisan voice on this issue. Intelligence officers should not be used as political footballs. In the case of Valerie Plame, she still works for the CIA and is not in a position to publicly defend her reputation and honor. We stand in her stead and ask that Republicans and Democrats honor her service to her country and stop the campaign of disparagement and innuendo aimed at discrediting Mrs. Wilson and her husband.

Our friends and colleagues have difficult jobs gathering the intelligence, which helps, for example, to prevent terrorist attacks against Americans at home and abroad. They sometimes face great personal risk and must spend long hours away from family and friends. They serve because they love this country and are committed to protecting it from threats from abroad and to defending the principles of liberty and freedom. They do not expect public acknowledgement for their work, but they do expect and deserve their government's protection of their covert status.

For the good of our country, we ask you to please stand up for every man and woman who works for the U.S. intelligence community and help protect their ability to live their cover.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry C. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Larry C. Johnson, former Analyst, CIA

JOINED BY:

Mr. Brent Cavan, former Analyst, CIA

Mr. Vince Cannistraro, former Case Officer, CIA

Mr. Michael Grimaldi, former Analyst, CIA

Mr. Mel Goodman, former senior Analyst, CIA

Col. W. Patrick Lang (US Army retired), former Director, Defense Humint Services, DIA

Mr. David MacMichael, former senior estimates officer, National Intelligence Council, CIA

Mr. James Marcinkowski, former Case Officer, CIA

Mr. Ray McGovern, former senior Analyst and PDB Briefer, CIA

Mr. Jim Smith, former Case Officer, CIA

Mr. William C. Wagner, former Case Officer, CIA