

**THE BLOG****Libby & hearts al-Libi**

By Marty Kaplan

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We already knew about Curveball and Chalabi — liars whose accounts the Administration used to bolster their case for imminent WMD danger requiring pre-emptive war. Now, thanks to a Doug Jehl New York Times piece, we know about Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, the defector who alleged that Iraq was training Al Qaeda members in the use of explosives and illicit weapons. Al-Libi was Scooter Libby's dream come true. But it turns out — even as his claims were making their way into Administration speeches — that as early as February 2002, American intelligence agencies knew that al-Libi was making the stuff up.

Imagine the scene in the West Wing. Here are Cheney and the rest of the cabal (W was doubtless off mountain biking, or brush-clearing) looking at al-Libi's claims on the one hand, and on the other, the Defense Intelligence Agency's warning not to buy what al-Libi was selling. They had a choice to make: trust American intelligence, or trust neocon ideology. They picked ideology. The next time you hear the "everyone-believed-Saddam-was-training-Al-Quaeda" talking point, remember that there were red lights flashing in the White House telling them al-Libi was a fabricator.

There's a word for holding fast to a belief despite the evidence: fundamentalism. Is a faith-based foreign policy cult really the best we can do?

UPDATE via Atrios: Newsweek reported that al-Libi was an early instance of the torture policy sent down to the CIA from then-White House counsel Alberto Gonzales and Scooter's subsequent successor, David Addington: *"Al-Libi was handed over to the CIA. 'They duct-taped his mouth, cinched him up and sent him to Cairo' for more-fearsome Egyptian interrogations, says the ex-FBI official. 'At the airport the CIA case officer goes up to him and says, 'You're going to Cairo, you know. Before you get there I'm going to find your mother and I'm going to f--- her.' So we [the FBI] lost that fight [against torture].'* Yes, and what al-Libi said under torture turned out to be exactly what the Cheney cabal, his torturers' bosses, wanted him to say. If that isn't fixing the intelligence to fit the policy (as the Downing Street Memo put it), what is?

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Marty Kaplan

USC Annenberg professor and Norman Lear Center director