

The Fix Is In

Grand jury indictments for some of Bush's closest collaborators?

By [Chris Floyd](#)

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Having railed at the wanton criminality of the Bush faction for so long, this column naturally partakes of the general glee arising from the looming possibility of genuine, grade-A grand jury indictments for some of the gang's top thugs.

Of course, we all know that the fix is in: If anyone in the White House is actually indicted and convicted for the high crime of exposing the identity of an undercover agent — in wartime, no less — they will certainly be pardoned when George W. Bush finally limps away from the steaming, stinking, blood-soaked ruin of his presidency. Nobody will do any hard time; in the end, the whole sick crew will simply pass through the golden revolving door into the lifetime gravy train of corporate grease and right-wing lecture-circuit glory.

Still, it is heartening to see the fever-sweat of fear popping out on the brows of these swaggering world-shakers, these third-rate goons and half-wit cranks posing as great statesmen, if only for a little while. Fear has always been their weapon of choice: They've used it to foment aggressive war, to crush political opposition, to manipulate the electorate and to mask their own incompetence, corruption and greed. Now they're getting a taste of it themselves — and they can't take it.

You can see it in their darting eyes, the twitches and fidgets: the fear, the nagging worry that perhaps, just perhaps, they haven't got it all nailed down this time; that perhaps, just perhaps, the law is something more than a fancy cane to beat the poor with; that it might, just might, apply to them as well. The sight of Bush's porky puppetmaster, Karl Rove, tottering out of his fourth grand jury appearance last week, with the shadow of manacles dangling before his pinched, bloated face, was an image to warm the cockles of every American patriot's heart.

But this schadenfruede, however tasty and effervescent, is no substitute for the strong meat of justice. And even in the unlikely — not to say inconceivable — event that the entire pack of jackals gets herded into the hoosegow for the agent-outing conspiracy, it will not bring back the innocent dead murdered at their command. It will not restore the shattered families writhing in the pits of grief and loss, from Baghdad to Burbank. It will not be recompense for the pointless sacrifice of soldiers and reservists sent on a criminal errand, plunged into a brutal and brutalizing hell — for nothing, for a chimera, for ideological lunacy, for the enrichment of cats already so fat they can barely stand up and waddle to the dish for another slurp of cream.

Not unless every one of the war conspirators and their chief minions — Bush, Rove, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell, Paul Wolfowitz, Condi Rice, Scooter Libby, Andrew

Card, Douglas Feith, John Bolton, Karen Hughes, John Yoo, Zalmay Khalilzad, George Tenet, Alberto Gonzales, Jay Bybee, Stephen Hadley, Jerry Bremer, Nicholas Calio, Richard Perle, Tony Blair and all the rest — were lined up in the public square with the entrails of their victims draped around their necks would anything approaching justice be done. But as Shakespeare told us long ago, “in the corrupted currents of this world, offence’s gilded hand may shove by justice, and oft ’tis seen the wicked prize itself buys out the law.”

For while official Washington strains to read the special prosecutor’s tea leaves, Bush’s war crime grinds on. Last weekend saw the “passage” of the much-ballyhooed Iraqi constitution — a desperately thrown-together rigamarole that quietly preserves the special privileges for Bush’s business cronies imposed by the former satrap, Bremer, while exacerbating the violent ethnic rivalries that Bush has unleashed across the tortured land.

This “victory for democracy” — achieved, in typical Bushist fashion, through outrageously rigged vote counts, as The New York Times reports — is in fact a blueprint for disaster. The Kurds will accelerate their U.S.-backed “ethnic cleansing” of the oil-rich north, while the Iranian-backed Shiite militias in the oil-rich south will accelerate their already murderous imposition of Talibanic religious rule. The once-dominant Sunni Arab minority, now marginalized and impoverished, will swell the ranks of the growing insurgency, as Baghdad and the nation’s central provinces plunge further into Somali-style anarchy. Terrorist freebooters, set loose in the one of the world’s most strategic locations by Bush’s destruction of the Iraqi state, will thrive in the chaos.

With no chance for the deliberately enfeebled central Iraqi government to take responsibility for the nation’s security, U.S. forces will remain knee-deep in the quagmire, killing and being killed without rhyme or reason — or hope of escape. Indeed, Bush is already signaling “a longer, broader conflict” in his speeches on the war, The New York Times reports. There is no “exit strategy” because Bush has never intended to leave. The installation of a permanent U.S. military presence in Iraq has been the war conspirators’ loudly proclaimed goal for many years, long before Bush was shoehorned into power — as we have noted here incessantly since 2002, citing chapter and verse from their own publications.

This is why they lied their way into war, this is why they outed a CIA agent whose husband exposed one of their lies: to pursue their dream of “global dominance,” of endless war profiteering and oil baksheesh. The prosecutor might give them a pinch, but the damage is already done: The dead will stay dead, the maimed will stay maimed, the tortured will never escape their nightmares. And the killing, the wounding and torment will go on.

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