

The Political Forum

*A review of social and political trends and events
impacting the world's financial markets*

Mark L. Melcher
Publisher
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

Stephen R. Soukup
Senior Editor
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

Monday, April 19, 2004

THEY SAID IT

“[Director of Central Intelligence George] Tenet and [Deputy Director John E.] McLaughlin went to the Oval Office. The meeting was for presenting “The Case” on WMD as it might be presented to a jury with Top Secret security clearances. There was great expectation....

With some fanfare, McLaughlin stepped up to brief with a series of flip charts. This was the rough cut, he indicated, still highly classified and not cleared for public release....

When McLaughlin concluded, there was a look on the president's face of, What's this? And then a brief moment of silence.

“Nice try,” Bush said. “I don't think this is quite – it's not something that Joe Public would understand or would gain a lot of confidence from.”...

Bush turned to Tenet. “I've been told all this intelligence about having WMD and this is the best we've got?”

From the end of one of the couches in the Oval Office, Tenet rose up, threw his arms in the air. “It's a slam-dunk case!” the director of central intelligence said.

Bush pressed. “George, how confident are you?”

Tenet...leaned forward and threw his arms up again. “Don't worry, it's a slam dunk!”

-- Excerpt from Bob Woodward's *Plan of Attack*, adapted for the *Washington Post*, Monday, April 19, 2004.

WHY IRAQ. *I was dissatisfied with that part of President Bush's news conference last week that dealt with the subject of why Americans must “stay the course” in Iraq. Statements like “A secure and free Iraq is an historic opportunity to change the world and make America more secure” are all right. But I continue to think that they don't provide an adequate justification for*

Subscriptions to The Political Forum are available by contacting:

The Political Forum

8563 Senedo Rd., Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842

Tel 540-477-9762, Fax 540-477-3359, Email melcher@thepoliticalforum.com,
or visit us at www.thepoliticalforum.com

a hot war in which American military personnel are dying. So this week, I thought I would write a speech for Mr. Bush, in which he could shed the shackles of liberal sensitivities and explain why the war in Iraq truly is in the best interests of America and Americans. So here goes.

My fellow Americans. Recently it has come to my attention that a growing number of citizens are questioning the purpose of the military action in Iraq, despite my repeated attempts to explain the great importance of this mission to the American people.

While considering how to remedy this situation, I came upon several articles published recently in the highly respected and deeply insightful weekly newsletter of The Political Forum, which made the argument that the principal reason that I have not been entirely convincing on this point is that I have tended to emphasize the fact that the military action in Iraq has made life better for the Iraqi people rather than to explain why the effort is of direct benefit to the American people. The newsletter put this criticism this way in the issue dated April 12, 2004.

For example, last week White House spokesman Dan Bartlett said the following.
“Despite the violence of the last 10 days, the Iraqi people are better off and their future is brighter than their past.” My response is that someone should give this guy thirty-five cents and tell him to call someone who cares.

While I find the thirty-five cent reference somewhat gratuitous, the point was a good one, especially in light of the fact that I am running for President of the United States not Iraq. So tonight I thought I would provide a comprehensive explanation for the military action in Iraq, sans the bit about how much good it has done the Iraqis.

For starters, I think it is important to understand that over a decade ago a large group of Islamic fanatics declared war on the United States. Because these people did not represent the government of a sovereign nation, the U.S. government treated their assertion as a law enforcement problem. In fact, even when these individuals launched actual attacks on American citizens and property around the world, such as killing 241 Marines in Lebanon in 1983 and the first terrorist strike at the World Trade Center in February 1993, their war declaration wasn't thought by most observers to be the beginning of a true war.

Then, as no American will ever forget, on September 11, 2001 these individuals struck at the very heart of United States, killing several thousands individuals in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania leaving no doubt in my mind that this was indeed a war, in every sense of the term.

This attack was different from previous military assaults upon the United States for a variety of reasons, the most important of which was that it took place on the American mainland, something that hadn't occurred since early in the 19th century. But what made it truly different was, as I said earlier, that it was not directly connected to or orchestrated by a foreign government. This left me, as President of the United States, facing the unique problem of how to go about fighting an enemy that has no homeland to defend.

In previous wars, U.S. presidents could send armies to fight in the homeland of the nation that threatened us. But, in the aftermath of September 11, it was not clear where this particular war was going to be fought. I was determined that it not be in the United States. As ludicrous as this

may sound, this was indeed one option. I could have decided to keep our armies at home; to concentrate our efforts exclusively on preventing future terrorist attacks via a greatly enhanced police and intelligence effort aimed at identifying and stopping each new attack before it occurred. “Fortress America” would have been a good name for such a plan.

Surely an extensive homeland defense network needed to be established, and I began to do so immediately after September 11. But I had no intention of making it the centerpiece of my plan to protect America against further terrorist attacks. Whether my critics believe it or not, there was then and still is today ample evidence that enemy combatants in this war have the ways, the means, and the intention to kill large numbers of Americans on American soil and abroad. They have chosen terror as their primary weapon in this war. And they have indicated that they would have no compunction about using nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. And finally, they have made it abundantly clear that they have no interest in a negotiated settlement. In fact, they have themselves declared that they are fighting what they consider to be a religious war in which the only acceptable outcome is victory.

As a result of these and other considerations, I was determined to assure that the principal battleground in this war would be on foreign soil, or as I put it at the time, I decided to “take the fight to the enemy.” The logical place to begin this campaign was Afghanistan. That was where Osama bin Laden was hiding. That was also the home of the Taliban, which was a self-declared enemy of America and an ally of Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda network.

So we went there, and while we didn’t capture bin Laden, we took away his primary base of operation, destroyed much of his operational network, captured or killed many of his senior operatives, and forced him into hiding. And finally, we turned Afghanistan into a base from which the United States could conduct military and intelligence operations in an effort to keep Islamic terrorists from launching any future attacks on America and Americans from that nation.

Yet, it was always clear to me that the United States would never be safe from Islamic terrorists unless and until we could stop Muslim nations from providing weapons, manpower, money, safe bases of operation, and diplomatic cover to the terrorists themselves and to their organizations.

Now this is a crucial point, so let me repeat it in another way. Since the terrorists who attacked the United States were not formally representing any sovereign nation, I believed then and continue to believe today that those nations that provide active support to these individuals must be held accountable as full partners in their actions. I am not an expert on the works of either Clausewitz or Sun Tzu, but I do know that in wartime, those who keep the supply lines running are just as important, if not more so, than those on the front lines. It is this belief that led me to make the statement, shortly after the September 11 atrocities, to all the nations in the world, that “You’re either with us or against us in the fight against terror.”

Now I have never believed that the United States had to engage militarily each and every nation that actively supports our terrorist enemies. But I am realistic enough to know that diplomacy alone is not going to convince every nation in that category to abandon its support for our enemies; that military force will be required in some cases, either to change the minds of the leaders of these nations or to change the leaders themselves.

Iraq was the most obvious example of a country where a forced regime change was the only logical option. It was also the best place to demonstrate America's resolve to use force if necessary, since Iraq was already in violation of United Nations sanctions.

I have been accused of having decided to go to war with Iraq soon after September 11. In a technical sense this is not true, since I was focused on many more immediate concerns during that time. But, as indicated above, I did feel early on in the war against our terrorist enemies that the only way to make America safe from a continued string of such attacks was to seek the enemy out and destroy both him and his support network.

In that sense, there was never any question in my mind that Saddam Hussein would eventually have to be deposed, just as there is no question in my mind right now that the current regimes in Iran and Syria, among others, must abandon their direct support for America's terrorist enemies or be destroyed. As President of the United States, I owe this to the men, women and children in this nation whose deaths are being plotted by Islamic terrorists at this very moment.

This brings up the question of whether my administration deliberately fabricated evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to justify the military attack. The answer is that we did not. We believed that those weapons existed, since Saddam had used them before on his own people and had refused to provide adequate evidence that they had been destroyed. Bob Woodward's new book *Plan of Attack* does a reasonably accurate job of explaining the processes that led to the actual action in Iraq. But as for the WMD controversy, I think the afore-mentioned Political Forum newsletter explained it best almost a year ago in the June 23, 2003 issue. In a piece entitled "The Final Days of the Mad Mullahs of Iran," the Forum put it this way.

I think it is entirely likely that the White House and the Pentagon began looking for a justification to force a "regime change" in Iraq immediately after the September 11 attacks, settled on the weapons of mass destruction threat as a primary factor, and set about building a dossier that would support the charge.

If this were the case, it would definitely have been putting the cart before the horse, but I think it is fair to say that virtually everyone in the White House and Pentagon was absolutely certain that Saddam did indeed have WMDs and that they would be found quickly after the war was over. So, from their perspective, there was no risk in tinkering with the evidence, if that's what it took to convince a reluctant Colin Powell, as well as Tony Blair and a handful of United Nations groupies, to support the effort.

Now I would argue with the phrase "tinkering with the evidence," but the fact is that we did emphasize evidence that tended to show that WMDs existed and downplayed contrary evidence. In any case, we were very definitely surprised when we failed to find WMDs, and we quickly began to make the case that other important factors justified the action anyway. The Political Forum correctly described this in the April 12, 2004 issue of their newsletter, as follows.

He [President Bush] settled on the cheery notion that by freeing the Iraqi people from a brutal dictator, America had paved the way for them to enjoy the fruits of a true democracy. This, he said, would bring them domestic tranquility and prosperity, and in doing so, it would provide an example for the rest of the Middle East, and this, in turn,

would, over the long term, permanently solve the problem of Islamic terrorism by removing the root cause.

The fact that I am making this speech tonight is evidence that I now believe that stressing the benefits to the Iraqi people over the strategic importance of the action in Iraq was an error. Make no mistake, our efforts to create a democratic Iraq, and thus make life better for ordinary Iraqis, are absolutely sincere, as is our oft-stated belief that if we succeed in doing this, Americans will be safer from terrorism.

But “nation building” was not, and is not the primary motivation for the forced removal of Saddam Hussein from power. We foolishly thought that if we emphasized this aspect of the operation, we would gain support in Europe and among those liberal Democrats in the United States who tend to favor military action only when no national interest is involved. These are the folks that Charles Krauthammer once described as members of the “Anthony Lewis school of foreign policy,” in honor of the now retired ultra-liberal *New York Times* nutbag columnist.

Nor, I might add, was our belief that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction the primary motivation, since we would have found another reason to launch war against him if we had concluded that he did not have WMDs. The primary reason, as I said earlier, was my conviction that if America is to be safe in the future from radical Muslim terrorists it must eliminate or neutralize the leadership of those nations that routinely provide succor to the enemy, and these include Syria, Iran, and, of course Iraq.

Now, regarding this last point, I know that my opponents have long argued that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was a strictly secular state with no interest in terrorism. And I also know that they believe that I nefariously convinced the vast majority of Americans that Saddam Hussein was involved in the events of 9/11, and that this “mistaken” impression is what underlies their support for the war in Iraq. They are wrong on both counts.

First, Saddam was known to harbor America’s enemies, including Abu Abbas, the leader of a faction of the Palestinian Liberation Front and the murderer of American citizen Leon Klinghoffer. He also harbored Abu Nidal, an extremely active anti-Western Palestinian terrorist and founder of the Abu Nidal Organization, a prolific terror group, which operated globally throughout the 1980s and ‘90s. We also know, as Secretary of State Colin Powell noted in his speech to the United Nations, that Saddam had extensive dealings with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a dangerous, militant thug, who was affiliated with al Qaeda, was funded heavily by the Mullahs of Iran, and who planned several anti-Western operations in Europe through his own terror organization al-Tawhid. Zarqawi, of course, remains active in leading foreign terror attacks on American soldiers in Iraq, and may have been connected to the 3/11 train bombings in Spain.

Finally, we have fairly solid intelligence that Saddam can be tied to the first attack on the World Trade Center, and some of our allies continue to insist to this day that Saddam played a role in the attacks of 9/11. As Laurie Mylroie has repeatedly shown, there is ample reason to believe that the man we know as “Ramzi Yousef,” who was responsible for masterminding the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, has strong Iraqi ties and may have been an Iraqi agent. Moreover, despite the fact that our intelligence agencies quickly dismissed the idea, to this day,

the factions of the Czech government insists that lead 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta met with Iraqi intelligence officials in Prague during the summer before the attacks.

I realize that none of this is enough to satisfy my opponents, but as the man tasked with protecting this nation, I cannot afford to take chances. And even if the Saddam and his brutal sons were not the primary sponsors of terror in the region, they did have significant ties to terrorist organizations, and their removal would, my administration reckoned, make it much easier to deal with the more prolific terrorist supporters.

So, with all of this in mind, I decided shortly after September 11 that the United States needs a permanent military and diplomatic presence in the heart of the Middle East. If things go well in the next year or so, we will have this presence within the confines of a reasonably friendly Iraq. In the worst case, we will have it within a hostile, but reasonably pacified Iraq.

If we use our base in Iraq well, we will be able peacefully to convince the current leaders of Iran and Syria to follow in the footsteps of Libya's Colonel Qadhafi and make the decision that supporting terrorism is not in their best interests. If we must, we will accomplish this purpose by sponsoring insurrections within their countries from our bases in Iraq. And if that fails, we will go to war with them.

I cannot stand here tonight and assure you, the American people, that there will never be another September 11. In fact, I cannot assure you that something infinitely worse might not occur on American soil, such as several simultaneous chemical, biological or nuclear strikes in many geographically dispersed metropolitan areas, there being abundant intelligence information pointing to the fact that such strikes are in the planning stages.

But I can tell you that the day that such an assurance can be given by a future U.S. president will come when, and only when terrorist sponsoring nations, such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, have been persuaded by the United States to change their ways. America cannot be made safe from such threats by homeland security alone. Fortress America is not the answer.

Finally, for those of you who hope and pray for a final settlement in the long-standing conflict between the state of Israel and the Palestinians, I can also say that peace on this front too is contingent on defeating terrorist factions in the Middle East, as well as a change in attitude or a change in leadership in those nations that provide support for terrorism. And that my fellow Americans is why American troops are fighting in Iraq today. May God bless them and may God bless America.

THE TERRIBLE SWIFT SWORD OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS,

PART II. For much of the past few weeks, the proceedings of the 9/11 Commission have generated as much news as the war in Iraq, despite the fact the war has escalated considerably on several fronts. Democrats, both on the Commission and in general, have generated headlines by using the hearings as a club with which to bash the Bush administration and to call into question the President's personal leadership. Republicans, in turn, have made news by publicly questioning the behavior of the panel's Democrats, arguing that they have been grossly politicized, and going so far as to call for the resignation from the panel of Democrat and former

Clinton Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick. In the midst of this brouhaha, much important information from the hearings has been almost entirely overlooked by the public.

Three weeks ago, in a piece titled “Who’s To Blame,” Mark argued that a significant factor in the breach of American security that led to the disaster of September 11 was “the terrible swift sword of political correctness,” which allowed numerous terrorists and terrorist supporters in the United States to move freely, plan attacks, and raise funds, while Steve Emerson and other heralds of the terrorist threat were dismissed as “racist.” Specifically, he wrote:

Time and again, AMC, CAIR and other similar organizations quieted or effectively diminished the impact of their critics by branding them as racists, a charge they knew would resonate loudly in the liberal mainstream media and the White House, even in the absence of any proof whatsoever. The result was that virtually everyone, whether inside or outside the government, who was involved in working to prevent another catastrophe such as the first World Trade Center bombing routinely found him or herself on the defensive.

Sickening examples of this abound. But one that surfaced recently during the Commission hearings was new to both Mark and I. And due to the mainstream press’ concentration on the political high jinx that has marked the Commission’s proceedings, rather than the substance of the commentary that occurred there, the sad and frightening thing is that the vast majority of Americans still are unaware of this example.

When National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice appeared before the Commission two weeks ago, most of the media attention was focused on two of her questioners, Richard Ben-Veniste and Bob Kerrey, who were either powerful, thoughtful, probing inquisitors or bilious partisans, depending on one’s political affiliation. Almost entirely missed in Ben-Veniste-Kerrey show was a line of questioning by former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, who was appointed to the panel at the insistence of his fellow seaman Senator John McCain. Among Secretary Lehman’s chief concerns was the transition between the Clinton and Bush teams, and among the questions he asked to that end was, “Were you aware that it was the policy [of the Clinton administration] . . . to fine airlines if they have more than two young Arab males in secondary questioning because that’s discriminatory?”

Now, if that sounds to you like a pretty strange or inflammatory charge against the Clinton administration, you’re not alone. Columnist and talk show host Michael Smerconish also thought the charge was “interesting” to say the least. So he did a little checking. And what he found is unnerving. A few days after Dr. Rice’s testimony, Smerconish asked Lehman what exactly he was saying, and received the following response:

We had testimony a couple of months ago from the past president of United, and current president of American Airlines that kind of shocked us all. They said under oath that indeed the Department of Transportation continued to fine any airline that was caught having more than two people of the same ethnic persuasion in a secondary line for line for questioning, including and especially, two Arabs . . .

And when Smerconish asked why that was so, Lehman replied, “because of this political correctness that became so entrenched in the 1990s, and continues in current administration.”

Just to be sure about what he thought he’d understood, Smerconish decided he’d follow up on this line with other sources, and describes a conversation with one such source as follows:

I ran all of this by Herb Kelleher, the legendary chairman of Southwest Airlines. Kelleher confirmed it, and that it began during the Clinton administration. The Justice Department said it was “concerned about equality of treatment with respect to screening.” Kelleher said, “The random element was put in . . . where you just choose people at random as opposed to picking them out for some particular reason, and that of course caused a great many more people to be screened.”

“So we don’t offend?” I asked.

“That was the root of it, yes,” he said.

Now, you’ll note in all of this that the people whom Smerconish interviewed all spoke of this policy in the present tense, meaning that *it continues to this day*. Despite the change in administration and even after September 11, it is still deemed “too insensitive” to single out potential terrorists. Of course, it is not as if this “continuation of policy” should really surprise anyone. After all, the Secretary of Transportation in the Clinton Administration, Norman Mineta, is still Transportation Secretary under President Bush.

Though President Bush has done some good things in the name of fighting terror since 9/11, retaining Mineta isn’t one of them. If the goal is to prevent something akin to 9/11 from happening again, then Mineta is almost certainly more of hindrance than a help, as is this continuing policy of fining airlines for having the sense to try to screen out potential terrorists, the overwhelming majority of which are, as Secretary Lehman noted, “young Arab males.”

Three weeks ago, Mark showed how political correctness played a significant role in leaving the nation unprepared for a serious attack by Islamists in 2001. John Lehman is trying to show how it could contribute to a future attack as well. And while this may be the most important lesson of the 9/11 Commission public hearings to date, don’t expect the mainstream media to take the time even to mention it.

JOHN KERRY: IT’S PERSONAL. When John Kerry comes to your town this summer or fall, be careful not to shake his hand too vigorously, or hug him too hard. He seems to bruise easily. Or at least that’s the impression I got after hearing Kerry’s Friday night rant against Dick Cheney and Karl Rove in particular, and the Bush administration in general, which the Senator claimed has a “twisted sense of ethics and morality.”

In an episode on Friday, which Reuters called “lashing out,” Kerry attacked the administration, or “counterattacked,” as he would probably put it, telling an audience at Pittsburgh University that he is tired of being called “soft” on defense by people with no military experience. Actually, what he said was, “I’m tired of Karl Rove and Dick Cheney and a bunch of people who went out

of their way to avoid their chance to serve when they had the chance. I'm not going to listen to them talk to me about patriotism.”

Allow me to make a few observations about Kerry's invective.

First, while I understand why Kerry feels that it may be more politically palatable to criticize the Vice President and Karl Rove than the President, his remarks on this subject are more than a little disingenuous. Vice President Cheney, as has been well documented, received a series of deferments that kept him out of Vietnam, first, 2-S student deferments and later a 3-A “hardship” deferment, as the sole supporter of a family, with daughter Elizabeth on the way. Not only is Cheney's story pretty mundane, it is, in fact, quite common for politicians of his age.

Indeed, his Democratic counterpart in the 2000 election, Senator Joseph Lieberman, followed the exact same path of deferments. To suggest that the Vice President “went out of his way” to avoid service is over-the-top and smacks a bit of the hard-left conspiracy buffs' accusations that the Cheney's got pregnant specifically to keep Dick out of the draft. As loony-leftist Timothy Noah notes, “Elizabeth Cheney's birth date falls precisely nine months and two days after the Selective Service publicly revoked its policy of not drafting childless husbands.”

As for Rove, he graduated from high school in the spring of 1969, and like Kerry himself, headed straight off to college. When Rove's erratic scholarship cost him his deferment, he drew a high draft number and was never called, not exactly the most artful of “dodges.” And, of course, unlike Kerry, neither Cheney nor Rove ever applied for any deferments, later rejected, to travel and study abroad in France for a year.

Second, regarding Kerry's defensiveness about the alleged attacks on his patriotism, the Senator needs get a grip on reality. The Bush camp has never once questioned Kerry's love of country. It has discussed his voting record, hardly something over which a presidential candidate should get his panties in a bunch.

Indeed, I suspect that Kerry himself understands this and is actually more upset about a *Boston Globe* story published last week that raises questions not about his patriotism, but about his service in the military, specifically about one of the Purple Hearts he received in Vietnam. According to the *Globe*:

[S]ome Vietnam veterans are using the Internet and talk radio to question the Democratic candidate's military record. They complain that Kerry's three Purple Hearts were for minor wounds and that he left Vietnam more than six months ahead of schedule under regulations permitting thrice-wounded soldiers to depart early.

A review by the *Globe* of Kerry's war record in preparation for a forthcoming book, “John F. Kerry: The Complete Biography,” found that the young Navy officer acted heroically under fire, in one case saving the life of an Army lieutenant. But the examination also found that Kerry's commanding officer at the time questioned Kerry's first Purple Heart, which he earned for a wound received just two weeks after arriving in Vietnam.

“He had a little scratch on his forearm, and he was holding a piece of shrapnel,” recalled Kerry’s commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Grant Hibbard. “People in the office were saying, ‘I don’t think we got any fire,’ and there is a guy holding a little piece of shrapnel in his palm.” Hibbard said he couldn’t be certain whether Kerry actually came under fire on Dec. 2, 1968, the date in question and that is why he said he asked Kerry questions about the matter.

Now, for the record, I think it’s pretty sad that some of John Kerry’s opponents have felt it necessary to sink to questioning his war record, some 36 years after he saw some combat. He was there; he served bravely; he received his medals under the same rules as everyone else. And he left Vietnam when the Navy said he could.

That said, Kerry can’t exactly be surprised that it has come to this. This is a very aggressive and passionately followed contest. President Bush has staked his claim to the White House on his war leadership, and Kerry has staked his on his war record. Some of Kerrey’s allies have accused the President not just of being a poor leader, but of being passively complicit in the murder of 3000 Americans. And they have used the allegedly “non-partisan” 9/11 Commission to do so. It was inevitable that someone would eventually return the favor and question Kerry’s claims to the White House in an equally contemptible manner. It’s low, but that’s the way the game is played.

And this brings me to my final observation, namely that Kerry’s seeming inability to get his emotions and those of his often emotionally volatile supporters under control is going to hurt him. This is a rough game, and it is going to get rougher, and highly personal. In fact, an ad placed by a Democratic Party club in St. Petersburg, Florida actually urges people to put Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld “up against a wall and say ‘This is one of our bad days’ and pull the trigger.” But you’ll see snow in Miami before you see Rumsfeld, or Cheney, or even the President himself running around screaming about how their opponents have hurt their feelings or “made it personal.”

Regular readers know that Mark and I do not think Kerry will prove, in the end, to be a very competitive candidate. If he continues to let such attacks rattle him so deeply and take him so far off message, we will almost certainly be proven right earlier than even we thought. After all, there’s a war afoot, and voters aren’t likely to take too well to someone who gets flustered when his opponents call him names.

CHENEY, CHINA, AND NORTH KOREA: A DEVELOPING STORY. As you likely know, Vice President Cheney spent last week in China, discussing a number of issues with leaders in Beijing. Chief among topics discussed was the ongoing nuclear standoff with North Korea. As the editors of *The Wall Street Journal* put it:

Perhaps the most important point on Mr. Cheney’s agenda was North Korea. While he praised the Chinese leadership for taking some steps to persuade the communist North to abandon its nuclear ambitions, he was also forthright on the matter. “Time is not necessarily on our side,” a senior U.S. official quoted him as telling his hosts as he

presented evidence obtained from Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan that Pyongyang might already possess three devices.

As we (and others) have long noted, Cheney's role is much different than that of previous Vice Presidents. When he is sent somewhere, the administration clearly means business. And it appears that the business he brought to Beijing was taken to heart by Hu Jintao and the rest of the Chinese leaders.

This morning, reports out of South Korea indicate that North Korean leader (and all around nut) Kim Jong Il is in Beijing on a "secret visit," and that "a summit meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao could happen within hours." Though neither country will likely concede as much publicly, there can be little doubt that the issue of North Korean nukes will be high on the agenda and that Cheney's visit will affect the tone and tenor of the discussions.

Unless the mainstream press picks up the story (which we deem unlikely), we will bring you any further pertinent details next week.

THE POLITICAL FORUM

Copyright 2004. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-9762, fax 540-477-3359. All rights reserved. Information contained herein is based on data obtained from recognized services, issuer reports or communications, or other sources believed to be reliable. However, such information has not been verified by us, and we do not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness, and we are not responsible for typographical errors. Any statements nonfactual in nature constitute only current opinions which are subject to change without notice.