

FOCUS - 3 of 7 DOCUMENTS

Copyright 2005 National Broadcasting Co. Inc.
All Rights Reserved
NBC News Transcripts

SHOW: Today 7:00 AM EST NBC

October 28, 2005 Friday

LENGTH: 884 words

HEADLINE: Tim Russert discusses possible indictments over CIA leak case

ANCHORS: KATIE COURIC, MATT LAUER, ANN CURRY

REPORTERS: TIM RUSSERT

BODY:

KATIE COURIC, co-host:

So now what? Tim Russert is NBC's Washington bureau chief and moderator of "Meet The Press."

Tim, good morning.

TIM RUSSERT reporting:

Good morning, Katie.

COURIC: All right, let's talk about--let's start by talking about the possibility indictment of "Scooter" Libby. If he resigns as a result of this, how big a deal will this be for this White House?

RUSSERT: It's huge, Katie. This is the first time in 130 years, as we mentioned the other day, that a sitting White House official would come under indictment. And it cuts to the core of what our government is all about. This would be about the issue of national security. If lying under oath or obstructing justice--we still don't know if there'll be an indictment or what the charge will be, but that's what's been discussed in the public domain.

COURIC: Will there be fallout for Vice President Cheney, since Scooter Libby is his chief of staff?

RUSSERT: Very significant, I believe, Katie. Again, published reports saying that Mr. Libby first heard about Valerie Plame from Vice President Cheney in a meeting on June 12th of 2003. And so there'll be an awful lot of discussion, and if the case went to trial, Katie, look for an awful lot of people to view it as a way of putting the Iraq War on trial. Much bigger than Mr. Libby himself.

COURIC: Now let's talk about Karl Rove, Tim. Now there are reports in this morning's New York Times, as you well know, that he may not be indicted but he will continue to be under investigation. What exactly does that mean, and how long can this investigation continue?

RUSSERT: Well--well, it ends today unless Mr. Fitzgerald is able to have an extension for the grand jury, because the grand jury time is out. It expires. Mr. Fitzgerald did meet with ju--Judge Hogan, and perhaps he has arraigned for an extension. The interesting thing about Mr. Rove's situation, Katie, is he has been before the grand jury at least four times, and there's been so much speculation as to why he keeps going back. Some say because Mr. Fitzgerald wants to get an iron-clad case against him; others say he wants to give an opportunity to purge himself in order to explain himself, if you will, in order to avoid being charged. A lot of the surprise and suspense I think will be eliminated very early this morning.

COURIC: Well the drip, drip, drip that this is creating for the White House cannot be helpful.

Tim Russert discusses possible indictments over CIA leak case NBC News T

RUSSERT: Not at all. And, Katie, that's why I believe the president pulled the plug on the nomination of Harriet Miers yesterday. Because they did not want to let that controversial nomination play out over the next three or four weeks.

COURIC: And...

RUSSERT: They wanted to get the bad news out about Miers yesterday; the bad news about the Fitzgerald investigation today, and then next week, in effect, try to begin anew the second term.

COURIC: And, in fact, The Washington Post this morning called the Harriet Miers nomination, quote, "one of the biggest political miscalculations of the president's term." So what do you think the White House has learned from this, and how will they approach the next nominee? Do you think they'll pick another female jurist whose name was bandied about before Harriet Miers was nominated, or do you think all bets are off, Tim?

RUSSERT: No, they could Katie. There are several women jurists. Edith Clemens, Edith Jones, Karen Williams, and the list goes on. I think what the president will have learned is that you have to send up someone who has impeccable credentials in terms of not only their conservative judicial philosophy, but in terms of their traditional temperament and their intellect. You can't just have someone that is not making a strong impression on your own party. There are 55 Republican senators, and the president couldn't persuade them to support his nominee.

COURIC: And Tim, in closing I'm going to put you on the spot and ask you, if you were the president's chief of staff, how would you advise him? I know a Republican told you this has been a week from hell for the White House. But if you were to tell him how he could turn things around, what would you say?

RUSSERT: Well, Katie, I'll just tell you what Republicans have told me this whole week, and that is they learned from Ronald Reagan after he tried to come back after Iran Contra, Bill Clinton after his impeachment, and that is you have to bring in fresh people, fresh ideas to try to reenergize and refocus the White House and say to the country, 'We're trying to start anew. We've made mistakes'--acknowledge mistakes--'but we have three years left, and we just cannot be an administration or a second term that just drifts aimlessly.' There are real issues: Iraq, energy prices, heating fuel, and so forth. It's time to try to govern.

COURIC: All right, Tim Russert. Tim, thanks so much, and we'll see you Sunday on "Meet The Press."

RUSSERT: Thanks, Katie.

COURIC: And a program note. One man at the center of the CIA case, Valerie Plame's husband Ambassador Joe Wilson, will be our guest Monday on TODAY. You'll also hear from him Sunday night on "Dateline."

And now let's head over to the newsdesk, right?

MATT LAUER, co-host:

That's right. We got Ann Curry in with the headlines of the morning.

Ann, good morning.

ANN CURRY, anchor:

Matt and Katie, good morning. Good morning, everybody.

LOAD-DATE: October 28, 2005