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## THE PLAME INVESTIGATION

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# Former Press Secretary Points Finger at Bush, Cheney for Deceit in CIA Leak Scandal

By *MATT APUZZO*

Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- Former White House press secretary Scott McClellan blames President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney for efforts to mislead the public about the role of White House aides in leaking the identity of a CIA operative.

In an excerpt from his forthcoming book, McClellan recounts the 2003 news conference in which he told reporters that aides Karl Rove and I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby were "not involved" in the leak involving operative Valerie Plame.

"There was one problem. It was not true," McClellan writes, according to a brief excerpt released Tuesday. "I had unknowingly passed along false information. And five of the highest-ranking officials in the administration were involved in my doing so: Rove, Libby, the vice president, the president's chief of staff and the president himself."

Bush's chief of staff at the time was Andrew Card.

The excerpt, posted on the Web site of publisher PublicAffairs, renews questions about what went on in the West Wing and how much Bush and Cheney knew about the leak. For years, it was McClellan's job to field -- and often duck -- those types of questions.

Now that he's spurring them, answers are equally hard to come by.

White House press secretary Dana Perino said it wasn't clear what McClellan meant in the excerpt. "The president has not and would not ask his spokespeople to pass on false information," she said.

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In this Friday, May 5, 2006, file photo, White House press secretary Scott McClellan smiles after finishing his last news briefing. In an excerpt from his forthcoming book, McClellan blames President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney for efforts to mislead the public about the role of White House aides in leaking the identity of a CIA operative (AP Photo/Ron Edmonds) (Ron Edmonds - AP)

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Plame issued a statement saying the opposite.

"I am outraged to learn that former White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan confirms that he was sent out to lie to the press corps," Plame said. "Even more shocking, McClellan confirms that not only Karl Rove and Scooter Libby told him to lie but Vice President Cheney, presidential Chief of Staff Andrew Card and President Bush also ordered McClellan to issue his misleading statement."

McClellan turned down interview requests Tuesday.

**Advertisement** Plame maintains the White House quietly outed her to reporters. Plame and her husband, former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, said the leak was retribution for his public criticism of the Iraq war. The accusation dogged the administration and made Plame a cause celebre among many Democrats.

McClellan's book, "What Happened," isn't due out until April, and the excerpt released Monday was merely a teaser. It doesn't get into detail about how Bush and Cheney were involved or reveal what happened behind the scenes.

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