

Click to claim your \$50:
When you sign up for an offer.

[Sears](#) [Kmart](#)
[Home Depot](#) [Gap](#)

click for details YourGiftCards

Welcome, Guest [Personalize News Home Page](#) - [Sign In](#)

Yahoo! News Fri, Jan 16, 2004 Search News Stories for Search Advanced

O'Neill Denies Charges on Book Documents



Tue Jan 13, 5:24 PM ET Add [White House - AP Cabinet & State](#) to My Yahoo!

By *MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writer*

WASHINGTON - Former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill on Tuesday denied that classified documents were used in a controversial new book in which he paints an unflattering portrait of President Bush ([news - web sites](#)). He softened some of his criticism in the face of a strong counterattack by the administration.



AP Photo

The Inspector General's Office at Treasury confirmed that it had begun an investigation into whether any laws or regulations had been violated when Treasury employees turned over 19,000 documents to O'Neill after he was fired by Bush in December 2002.

Meanwhile, the administration intensified its criticism of O'Neill's assertions in the book, "The Price of Loyalty," including his charge that Bush had begun planning to overthrow Saddam Hussein ([news - web sites](#)) in the first days of his presidency.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, echoing comments Bush made in Mexico, said that the administration was simply following the policies of "regime change" of the Clinton administration and Bush did not commit to a war with Iraq ([news - web sites](#)) until shortly before the invasion began last March.

Rumsfeld also told reporters at the Pentagon ([news - web sites](#)) that his experiences in the administration were "night and day" different from the detached president described by O'Neill. The Treasury secretary said Bush so seldom asked questions during Cabinet meetings that it reminded him of a "blind man in a room full of deaf people."

In contrast, Rumsfeld said of Bush, "I have just enormous respect for his brain, his engagement, his interest, his probing questions, his constructive and positive approach to issues."

Rumsfeld said he had called O'Neill, his friend since the 1960s, and cautioned him against participating in any kind of kiss-and-tell book about the two years he spent in the administration before Bush fired him in December 2002.

O'Neill said he was sorry about one thing. "I used some vivid language, that if I could take it back, I'd take it back because it's become the controversial centerpiece. ... It's not my intention to be personally critical of the president or of anyone else," he said.

The furor continued Tuesday as the book, written by former Wall Street Journal reporter Ron Suskind, began appearing in book stores.

Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., called for a congressional investigation into O'Neill's allegations while O'Neill was criticized in a Wall Street Journal editorial as a "policy and political blunderbuss who must not have been paying attention during the 2000 presidential campaign."

For his part, O'Neill, appearing on NBC's "Today" program, denied that any classified government documents had been used in the book, which he said was written to inform the public about a "broken political process" in which serious problems such as the looming crisis in Social Security ([news - web sites](#)) and Medicare could not be debated responsibly in Washington's political atmosphere.

O'Neill said the Treasury Department ([news - web sites](#))'s general counsel's office, responding to his request for copies of all documents that had crossed his desk at Treasury that were not classified, had given him computer disks containing 19,000 separate documents, which he turned over to Suskind without reviewing.

He said if any classified material had mistakenly been turned over, it would have been the fault of Treasury employees because he had not taken any documents with him when he left.

Asked if he plans to vote for Bush in November's presidential election, O'Neill said he "probably" would. "I don't see anybody that strikes me as better prepared and more capable," he said.

Vice President Dick Cheney ([news - web sites](#)), who approached O'Neill about taking the Treasury job and then was the person who informed O'Neill he had been fired, said Tuesday he interpreted O'Neill's TV appearance as an effort to "sort of back off all the things it was said he had said."

"I'm not quite sure how to take what he said," Cheney said in an interview with KIRO radio in Seattle.

Richard Delmar, counsel to Treasury's Office of Inspector General, said the office is investigating the circumstances surrounding the transmittal of all the documents to O'Neill and what O'Neill did with the material.

Delmar's comments indicated the scope of the investigation will be broader than officials had indicated on Monday when they said the investigation would be into a single document stamped "Secret" that was shown during O'Neill's interview Sunday on the CBS program "60 Minutes."



Reuters

Slideshow: Former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill

IRAQ IN TRANSITION

Latest headlines:

- [Cleric Warns of Rejecting U.S. Iraq Plan](#)
AP - 12 minutes ago
- [Landmine destroys packed bus in Iraq, as tens of thousands demonstrate for elections](#)
AFP - 46 minutes ago
- [Anti-globalisation movement to open first post-Iraq war strategy forum](#)
AFP - 48 minutes ago

[Special Coverage](#)

Ratings: Would you recommend this story?

Not at all **1** - **2** - **3** - **4** - **5** Highly

Avg Rating: 3.77, 1084 votes

Next Story: [White House: Give Industry Greater Voice](#) (AP)

More [White House](#) Stories

- [Bush to Revive Social Security Tax Plan](#) (AP)
- [Hundreds Protest As Bush Visits MLK Tomb](#) (AP)
- [Hundreds Protest Bush Visit to MLK Tomb](#) (AP)
- [Bush's Martin Luther King Proclamation](#) (AP)
- [Laura Bush: Budget to Help Historic Sites](#) (AP)

Copyright © 2004 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. The information contained in the AP News report may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without the prior written authority of The Associated Press.

Copyright © 2004 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved.

[Questions or Comments](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Copyright Policy](#) - [Ad Feedback](#)