

There things stood until September 11, 2001, when Cheney and Rumsfeld suddenly began to act out parts of a script they had rehearsed years before.

Their participation in the extra-constitutional continuity-of-government exercises, remarkable in its own right, also demonstrates a broad, underlying truth about these two men. For three decades, from the Ford Administration onward, even when they were out of the executive branch of government, they were never far away. They stayed in touch with defense, military, and intelligence officials, who regularly called upon them. They were, in a sense, a part of the permanent hidden national-security apparatus of the United States—inhabitants of a world in which Presidents come and go, but America keeps on fighting.

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