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# Justifying the War in Iraq: What the Bush Administration's Uses of Evidence Reveal

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## **Abstract**

This essay argues that, if carefully read, the public statements of the Bush administration in the run-up to the March 2003 U.S.-led military intervention in Iraq reveal that the available evidence did not warrant the administration's confident claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD). To support this argument, the essay explores the administration's verbal leakage and Freudian slips, shifts in the burden of proof, strategies that minimized evidentiary accountability, assertions of the presence of convincing evidence that could not be publicly revealed, and tacit concessions that the case for WMD was a patchwork.

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# JUSTIFYING THE WAR IN IRAQ: WHAT THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S USES OF EVIDENCE REVEAL

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON

*This essay argues that, if carefully read, the public statements of the Bush administration in the run-up to the March 2003 U.S.-led military intervention in Iraq reveal that the available evidence did not warrant the administration's confident claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD). To support this argument, the essay explores the administration's verbal leakage and Freudian slips, shifts in the burden of proof, strategies that minimized evidentiary accountability, assertions of the presence of convincing evidence that could not be publicly revealed, and tacit concessions that the case for WMD was a patchwork.*

Half a year after the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, the disparity between Hprewar intelligence reports and the public case made by the Bush administration was clear. After reviewing 19 volumes of material, holding closed-door hearings, and making oversight trips to Iraq over a four-month period, in September 2003 House Intelligence Committee chair Republican Porter Goss and the committee's ranking Democrat, Jane Harman, concluded in a letter to CIA Director George Tenet: "The intelligence available to the U.S. on Iraq's possession of WMD and its programs and capabilities relating to such weapons after 1998, and its links to al-Qa'ida, was fragmentary and sporadic." The letter also noted, "The absence of proof that chemical and biological

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weapons and their related development programs had been destroyed was considered as proof that they continue to exist.”<sup>1</sup>

Press reports confirmed that the administration’s case for war did not accurately represent the available intelligence. More than a year after the United States intervened militarily to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the *New York Times* produced a multipage special report titled “Skewed Intelligence on Iraq Colored the March to War.” Among other things the report revealed that while the vice president “said he knew ‘for sure’ and ‘in fact’ and ‘with absolute certainty’ that Mr. Hussein was buying equipment to build a nuclear weapon,” the CIA reports were saying “evidence ‘suggested’ or ‘could mean’ or ‘indicates.’” In short, “[t]he intelligence community had not yet concluded that Iraq had indeed reconstituted its nuclear program.”<sup>2</sup> In the run-up to the war, of course, the public and the press could not test the administration’s words against these intelligence documents.

With central parts of the Bush case for intervention in Iraq now in tatters, it is appropriate to ask, could the country have known beforehand from the public statements of the Bush administration that the available evidence did not warrant the claim that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction? In this essay I will argue that the answer is yes. Moreover, I will suggest that while those making the case for intervention in Iraq may have “believed” that Saddam was hiding stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, their rhetoric reveals that they lacked the evidence required to justify any of their categorical assertions that Saddam had WMD. Yet those representing the executive branch repeatedly made such claims:

Rumsfeld—“We do know that the Iraqi regime has chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>3</sup>

Powell—“When we confront a regime that harbors ambitions for regional domination, hides weapons of mass destruction and provides haven and active support for terrorists, we are not confronting the past, we are confronting the present.”<sup>4</sup>

Powell—“We know that Saddam Hussein is determined to keep his weapons of mass destruction; he’s determined to make more.”<sup>5</sup>

Cheney—“He now is trying, through his illicit procurement network, to acquire the equipment he needs to be able to enrich uranium to make the bombs.”<sup>6</sup>

Cheney—“Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us. And there is no doubt that his aggressive regional ambitions will lead him into future confrontations with

his neighbors—confrontations that will involve both the weapons he has today, and the ones he will continue to develop with his oil wealth.”<sup>7</sup>

Bush—“The end result is that Saddam Hussein still has chemical and biological weapons and is increasing his capabilities to make more. And he is moving ever closer to developing a nuclear weapon.”<sup>8</sup>

Bush—“Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised.”<sup>9</sup>

The inference that the public was expected to draw from these expressions of certainty was made explicit in a press briefing on December 5, 2002. There, White House press secretary Ari Fleischer said, “The president of the United States and the Secretary of Defense would not assert as plainly and bluntly as they have that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction if it was not true, and they did not have a solid basis for saying it.”<sup>10</sup>

### **THE BUSH CASE BETRAYS ITS OWN EVIDENTIARY WEAKNESS**

The rhetoric used by the Bush administration to establish the existence of weapons of mass destruction betrayed its wobbly underpinnings in ways that included: (1) Freudian slips or verbal leakage that suggested a lack of confidence in the case and an intent to disarm Saddam regardless of the evidence; (2) refusing to accept the burden of proof and shifting it to Saddam Hussein while making it impossible for him to assume it; (3) carefully crafted language minimizing Bush’s accountability for the evidence; (4) suggesting that conclusive evidence existed but couldn’t be revealed; and (5) concessions that the case was a patchwork. At the same time the inference the public was invited to make that Saddam played a role in September 11th was called into question by the administration’s unwillingness to use the first congressional resolution after September 11th as justification for the war in Iraq. If Saddam had aided the September 11th terrorists, that earlier resolution had already authorized military intervention.

#### *1. Leakage (or Freudian Slips)*

Read between the lines and listen to verbal slips and the Bush administration rhetoric reveals both doubts about the strength of its evidence and a hidden agenda. Those who study nonverbal deception talk about “leakage”—subtle cues that betray the fact that a person is being deceptive or evasive. Of course, leakage can occur verbally as well. Like such leaks, Freudian slips or cues out

of conscious control can reveal a text behind the explicit one.<sup>11</sup> These sorts of verbal cues occurred at key moments in the run-up to the war.

*Did Saddam destroy his WMD?*

Leakage occurs in the backtracking by Condoleezza Rice, who told Wolf Blitzer on CNN September 8, 2002: “The fact is that the—that they didn’t—we don’t believe that they destroyed them all.” Although she begins to say it, Rice cannot prove that “they didn’t destroy all of them.” As a result, in midsentence she shifts to a statement of personal and administration “belief”: “we don’t believe that they destroyed them all.” She then metacommunicates to discredit the source: “Iraq has a history of lying about everything.”<sup>12</sup>

This interiorization of evidence (“we don’t believe”) makes the claim non-falsifiable. That move also sets up a post-invasion defense of the decision process articulated by General Tommy Franks in his autobiography. “The issue is not whether the source of the intelligence information was telling the truth,” he writes, “but whether George Tenet, Colin Powell, and President Bush *believed* that the information was true. I believe they did. I know I did.”<sup>13</sup>

*Had Saddam reconstituted his nuclear program?*

In a similar vein, on the March 16, 2003, edition of *Meet the Press*, Vice President Cheney’s statements about Saddam’s nuclear ambitions and capacity can be read to say that the administration “knew” that he was trying to acquire nuclear weapons but “believed” that he had “reconstituted nuclear weapons”:

“if he were tomorrow to give everything up, if he stays in power, we have to assume that as soon as the world is looking the other way and preoccupied with other issues, he will be back again rebuilding his BW and CW capabilities, and *once again, reconstituting his nuclear program*” [emphasis added]. [Here reconstituting could refer to the nuclear program the Allies found in place in Iraq after the first Gulf War.]

“we know he’s out trying once again to produce nuclear weapons . . .”

“we know he has been absolutely devoted to trying to acquire nuclear weapons. And *we believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons.*”<sup>14</sup> (emphasis added)

*Legal or illegal weapons?*

As post-invasion accounts have confirmed, and pre-invasion evidence suggested, there was strong evidence that the aluminum tubes Iraq was trying to purchase were not components central to a centrifuge used for nuclear enrichment but rather were meant for conventional rocket launchers.<sup>15</sup> If read in that

context, a lapse similar to the step back by Condoleezza Rice in the earlier example may have occurred in the 2003 State of the Union address where Bush said,

The United States will ask the U.N. Security Council to convene on February the 5th to consider the facts of Iraq's ongoing defiance of the world. Secretary of State Powell will present information and intelligence about Iraq's *legal—Iraq's illegal* weapons programs, its attempt to hide those weapons from inspectors, and its links to terrorist groups.<sup>16</sup> (emphasis added)

*Did Bush plan to try diplomatic means of resolving the Iraq situation or was he set on war from the beginning?*

The president secured “Congressional Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq” on the premise that he would use the resolution to increase the likelihood of Hussein's compliance with UN resolutions and would, only if necessary, deploy force. War was cast as a last resort, a threat to be used to force Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions and the agreement that ended the first Gulf War.

Accordingly, Secretary of State Colin Powell said on September 19, 2002, that “the President has not decided on a military option,”<sup>17</sup> a position reiterated by the president on October 1, 2002, when he noted, “Of course, I haven't made up my mind we're going to war with Iraq. I've made up my mind, we need to disarm the man.” And importantly, before the congressional vote authorizing use of military force, in Cincinnati, October 7, 2002, Bush stated, “Later this week, the United States Congress will vote on this matter. I have asked Congress to authorize the use of America's military, *if it proves necessary*, to enforce U.N. Security Council demands. Approving this resolution *does not mean that military action is imminent or unavoidable*. The resolution will tell the United Nations and all nations that America speaks with one voice and is determined to make the demands of the civilized world mean something. Congress will also be sending a message to the dictator in Iraq that his only chance—his only choice is full compliance, and the time remaining for that choice is limited.”<sup>18</sup> (emphasis added)

A Freudian slip uttered by President Bush ten days before the congressional vote called those assurances into question. In extemporaneous remarks following a meeting with congressional leaders, Bush said, “Saddam Hussein has thumbed his nose at the world. He's a threat to the neighborhood. He's a threat to Israel. He's a threat to the United States of America. And we're just going to have to deal with him. And the best way to deal with him is for the world to rise up and say, ‘You disarm, and we'll disarm you.’ And if not—if at the very end of the day nothing happens, the United States, along with others, will



act.”<sup>19</sup> If President Bush intended to use the congressional resolution to force compliance with the UN resolutions, he would, of course, have said, “You disarm OR we’ll disarm you.”

If that “and” expressed actual intent, then Bush was being disingenuous in an exchange with reporters in late December 2002:

And we hope to resolve all the situations in which we find ourselves in a peaceful way. And so that’s my commitment, to try to do so peacefully. But I want to remind people that, Saddam Hussein, the choice is his to make as to whether or not the Iraqi situation is resolved peacefully.

You said we’re headed to war in Iraq—I don’t know why you say that. I hope we’re not headed to war in Iraq.<sup>20</sup>

He also suggested that he planned to solve the crisis peacefully if possible. “I’m the person who gets to decide, not you. I hope this can be done peacefully. We’ve got a military presence there to remind Saddam Hussein, however, that when I say we will lead a coalition of the willing to disarm him if he chooses not to disarm, I mean it.”<sup>21</sup>

## 2. *Shift the Burden of Proof*

When you lack conclusive evidence, shift the burden of proof and require Saddam to prove a negative. To undercut him further, discredit him as a source of usable evidence.

In a revealing exchange on December 5, 2002, veteran White House reporter Helen Thomas repeatedly pressed White House press secretary Ari Fleischer for evidence of the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Fleischer responded by asserting that the burden was on Saddam to show that he did not have such weapons:

Q: So—but if you had this evidence . . . why don’t you lay it out on the table? Why don’t you share it with the American public?

Fleischer: I think the burden now falls on Saddam Hussein. . . .

Q: Why can’t you present your own evidence, for god’s sake? Nobody is stopping you . . .

Fleischer: I think, Helen, the burden is on Saddam Hussein to comply with the will of the United Nations.<sup>22</sup>

Fleischer’s most remarkable use of this move occurred not in the period before the initiation of the war, but after. On July 14, 2003, he said that “did Iraq seek

uranium from Africa" was "an issue that very well may be true. We don't know if it's true—but *nobody, but nobody*, can say it is wrong"<sup>23</sup> (emphasis added). Of course, no one can say it was wrong, because nobody can prove a negative.

Throughout the run-up to the war, administration officials shifted the burden of proof to Hussein as well. On September 8, 2002, Condoleezza Rice said,

Well, we're going to be laying out for the American people and for the Congress in appropriate hearings and at the U.N., all of the available evidence that we can make available as to his progress.

But I want to just caution, it is not incumbent on the United States to prove that Saddam Hussein is trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction. He's already demonstrated that he's trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

It is incumbent on Saddam Hussein, who, after all, signed on to an obligation to disarm, to *convince the world that he is not trying to*. And every piece of experience with him, all of the available evidence is simply that he continues down this road.<sup>24</sup> (emphasis added)

The notion that Saddam would want to convince the world that he is not trying to disarm may be another Freudian slip. Rice also argued, "The burden of proof is on him to show that he has disarmed, not on the United States, not on Great Britain, not on the members of the international community."<sup>25</sup> She made the same move in an op-ed in the *New York Times* titled "Why We Know Iraq Is Lying."<sup>26</sup>

In the January 2003 State of the Union, Bush shifts the burden of proof to Saddam as well:

The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed in the 1990s that Saddam Hussein had an advanced nuclear weapons development program, had a design for a nuclear weapon, and was working on five different methods of enriching uranium for a bomb. The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production. Saddam Hussein has not credibly explained these activities. He clearly has much to hide.<sup>27</sup>

Four times in the 2003 State of the Union address Bush asserts that Hussein had horrific weapons and has "given no evidence that he has destroyed them":

The United Nations concluded in 1999 that Saddam Hussein had biological weapons sufficient to produce over 25,000 liters of anthrax, enough doses to kill several million people. He hasn't accounted for that material. He's given no

evidence that he has destroyed it. The United Nations concluded that Saddam Hussein had materials sufficient to produce more than 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin, enough to subject millions of people to death by respiratory failure. He hasn't accounted for that material. He's given no evidence that he has destroyed it. Our intelligence officials estimate that Saddam Hussein had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent. In such quantities, these chemical agents could also kill untold thousands. He's not accounted for these materials. He has given no evidence that he has destroyed them. U.S. intelligence indicates that Saddam Hussein had upwards of 30,000 munitions capable of delivering chemical agents. Inspectors recently turned up 16 of them, despite Iraq's recent declaration denying their existence. Saddam Hussein has not accounted for the remaining 29,984 of these prohibited munitions. He's given no evidence that he has destroyed them.<sup>28</sup>

Repeatedly Bush states that Hussein "had" weapons, not that he "has." The president invites the inference that he "has" by the fact that Saddam has failed to satisfy the Bush administration that he has destroyed them. This shuttles the burden of proof to Saddam.

When the assertion that Saddam has the burden of proof and insinuations that the administration has evidence it cannot reveal failed to quiet reporters' questions, Ari Fleischer simply ducks the question:

Q: Are you essentially confirming the statement of one member of the inspection team that if the U.S. has intelligence that points to Saddam's weapons of mass destruction program, it has not been shared with the inspectors? And if that's the case, why has it not been shared with the inspectors?

Fleischer: Wendell, it is never the practice of the White House to discuss how we—what in any detail level we do with intelligence information . . .

Q: Well, having said that, you can then say whether or not the inspector is accurate in saying that if you have the intelligence it has not been shared with the team.

Fleischer: We will continue to work closely with the inspectors as the events go along, as we always have.<sup>29</sup>

*Argument from rhetorical questions.*

The rhetorical questions asked by Powell at the United Nations are a classic means of shifting the burden of proof. At the same time, they put the worst

possible construction on any ambiguous situation and assume that Iraq's motive is deception. The rhetorical questions include:

"Why would Iraq suddenly move equipment of this nature before inspections if they were anxious to demonstrate what they had or did not have?"

"Where did Iraq take all of this equipment? Why wasn't it presented to the inspectors?"

*Set in place the lines of argument that make it impossible for Saddam to prove he has no WMD.*

If the claims Hussein makes cannot be believed, then any evidence he provides will be dismissed. Condoleezza Rice made that point on September 8, 2002, when she said, "Iraq has a history of lying about everything. This is not a regime that can be trusted."<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, in a March 16, 2003, interview after inspectors had been let back, Vice President Dick Cheney said,

We know that based on intelligence that he has been very, very good at hiding these kinds of efforts. He's had years to get good at it and we know he has been absolutely devoted to trying to acquire nuclear weapons. And we believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons. I think Mr. ElBaradei [Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency] frankly is wrong. And I think if you look at the track record of the International Atomic Energy Agency and this kind of issue, especially where Iraq's concerned, they have consistently underestimated or missed what it was Saddam Hussein was doing. I don't have any reason to believe they're any more valid this time than they've been in the past.<sup>31</sup>

The move to bounce the burden of proof to Saddam, ensure that he could not satisfy it, and ask the audience to agree by posing a rhetorical question was on display when Powell said,

Now, of course, Iraq will argue that these items can also be used for legitimate purposes. But if that is true, why do we have to learn about them by intercepting communications and risking the lives of human agents? With Iraq's well documented history on biological and chemical weapons, why should any of us give Iraq the benefit of the doubt?<sup>32</sup>

The resulting no-win situation created for Hussein was on vivid display in a press briefing by Bush press secretary Ari Fleischer on December 2, 2002. There a reporter noted, "You're assuming in your answer that they have

weapons of mass destruction which they are hiding. They say they do not; you say that they do.” Fleischer responds first by discrediting Hussein as a source: “Saddam Hussein does not exactly have a track record of telling the world the truth.” He then creates a classic double bind for Saddam:

So he, on December 8th, has to indicate whether or not he has weapons. . . . If he declares he has none, then we will know that Saddam Hussein is once again misleading the world. . . . If Saddam Hussein indicates that he has weapons of mass destruction and that he is violating United Nations resolutions, then we will know that Saddam Hussein again deceived the world.<sup>33</sup>

### *3. Minimizing Bush's Accountability*

Carefully worded claims both reveal lack of confidence in the evidence and reduce Bush's accountability for it. Shifts in the strength of assertions reveal that administration officials decreased the strength of some claims that had been challenged and escalated the strength of the conclusion about the existence of WMD.

To illustrate the ways in which Bush's use of evidence telegraphed its own weakness and reduced his accountability, I will focus on his changing statements about the existence of and uses for the aluminum tubes. I will then track the administration's various escalating claims about the existence of WMD in Iraq. Between the speech to the United Nations in September 2002 and the State of the Union address in January 2003, Bush reduced the strength of the claim about the tubes in three ways. In the speech at the UN in 2002, he says, “Iraq has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon.”<sup>34</sup> In the State of the Union address he notes, “Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production.”<sup>35</sup>

One indication that Bush knew that his evidence on aluminum tubes was suspect is the change in sourcing and diluted strength of these claims in the second speech. In the first he states it as fact, in the second as something he has been told not by our intelligence officials (that is by the U.S. sources) but by someone else. Here the direct evidence of attempts to gain nuclear weaponry is secondhand and based on the reports of others. If they prove false, as they later did, Bush and his representatives can argue that he was stating the views of others, not personally certifying the accuracy of the claims.

Importantly, the two most controversial administration claims—the ones used to forge an inference that Iraq is developing or seeking to develop nuclear capabilities—are credited not to an individual or organization accountable to

Bush but to others. "The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production."<sup>36</sup> "Our intelligence *sources*" are of course not the same as "our intelligence *officials*." If the claims are incorrect, then it is the British government and the intelligence sources, not George W. Bush, who deserve the blame.

When that evidence about "yellowcake" from Africa (specifically Niger) was discredited, Donald Rumsfeld defended its inclusion in the State of the Union address by saying that "[i]t turns out that it's technically correct what the president said, that the U.K. does—did say that—and still says that."<sup>37</sup> (Here the shift from "does" to "did" and then back to present tense suggests the question, were the British still saying it after all?)

Two other changes weaken the strength of the offered claim about uranium: (1) "has made several attempts" becomes "he has attempted." This change mutates multiple attempts to the possibility there was a single attempt. (2) "[U]sed to enrich uranium" has become "suitable for nuclear weapons productions." In this alteration, definite use has shifted to possible use. But the strongest evidence that the uranium claim was ill founded occurred when Secretary Powell omitted it entirely in his speech to the UN.

Whereas the implied confidence in the claim about the tubes declined over time, the certainty about WMD escalated. However the nature of the increased confidence provides additional evidence for the notion that the administration lacked solid evidence for the existence of WMD. On February 24, 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell told reporters that sanctions "exist—not for the purpose of hurting the Iraqi people, but for the purpose of keeping in check Saddam Hussein's ambitions toward developing weapons of mass destruction. . . . And frankly they have worked. He has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors."<sup>38</sup> In late July, Condoleezza Rice was on the same page as Powell when she said, "we are able to keep arms from him. His military forces have not been rebuilt."<sup>39</sup> Four months later, on November 26, 2001, President Bush said in a press conference, "[A]s for Mr. Saddam Hussein, he needs to let inspectors back in his country, to show us that he is not developing weapons of mass destruction."<sup>40</sup> By August 16, 2002, doubt and an argument for verification had become assurance that Saddam wanted WMD. President Bush told reporters that "this man [Saddam] is thumbing his nose at the world, that he has gassed his own people, that he is trouble in his neighborhood, that he desires weapons of mass destruction."<sup>41</sup> Thirteen days later, on August 29, Vice President Cheney stated that "there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There

is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us.”<sup>42</sup> In less than a two-week period, Saddam had seemingly translated his desire into acquisition. Apparently the secretary of state was not aware of the acquisition. On the same day as the categorical statement by Cheney, Colin Powell told an interviewer for the BBC, “We know that they had weapons of mass destruction 12 years ago. . . . Now, how much more they have done since 1998, what their inventories might be like now, this is what is not known and this is one of the reasons it would be useful to let the inspectors go in. They have to be able to go anywhere they need to, anytime they need to, to see whatever they have to see to assure the world that these weapons are not there or are being brought under control.”<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. *Suggesting Evidence that Can't Be Revealed*

As the administration made the case for war, it offered one argument that could only be refuted with evidence to which the public was not privy. This argument invited the audience to replace gaps in proof with the assumption that secret information warrants the conclusion. Such a move essentially justifies a conclusion with an appeal to trust the secret intelligence and a supporting appeal to the personal credibility of the speaker.

So, for example, when on September 8, 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was asked by CBS's Bob Schieffer whether there is “sensitive information, that the administration has that it has not yet shared with the public, that makes you take this more seriously than, say, some people on the outside take it at this point?” he replied in part, “And the short answer is, of course there's information inside the government that's not been spread before the public. And there has to be and there should be.”<sup>44</sup> The same day Secretary of State Colin Powell was asked by Fox's Brit Hume, “Do they [our allies] know all we know?” Powell responded, “Probably not. I don't think—I hope nobody ever knows all we know. But I think they know enough to come to the same conclusion: that he has this capability and he continues to develop it.”<sup>45</sup> And on *Meet the Press*, when Tim Russert asked Vice President Cheney, “Why haven't our allies, who presumably would know the same information, come to the same conclusion?” the vice president responded, “I don't think they know the same information. I think the fact is that, in terms of the quality of our intelligence operation, I think we're better than anybody else, generally, in this area. I think many of our European allies, for example, who are reluctant to address this issue or who have been critical of the suggestion that somehow the United States wants to aggressively go address this issue—I think many of them do not have access to the information we have. Now, some of this clearly comes from very sensitive sources, and we have to be very careful to try to protect those sources.”<sup>46</sup>

A month and a half before the formal start of the war, Secretary of State Colin Powell made the same argument to the UN Security Council. "I cannot tell you everything that we know," he said. "But what I can share with you, when combined with what all of us have learned over the years, is deeply troubling." Later in the speech, Powell implies that the information that is classified has high evidentiary value:

When they searched the home of an Iraqi nuclear scientist, they uncovered roughly 2,000 pages of documents. You see them here being brought out of the home and placed in U.N. hands. Some of the material is classified and related to Iraq's nuclear program.<sup>47</sup>

There is no evidence from the 2,000 pages in this statement. But whispered in the last line is the implication that if Powell could tell us what the United States learned from the document, we would share his concerns.

If one accepts the possibility that the conclusive evidence cannot be disclosed and if one trusts any or all of those administration officials offering assurances that WMD exist, then the administration's categorical conclusions with which I opened this essay could be justified by a suppressed premise.

Of course, we now know that there was no secret evidence that conclusively made the case. Instead the argument for war was built on circumstantial evidence and assumptions that past existence and use of WMD made current existence and future use plausible. Among the once-secret evidence strategically revealed in public to make the case for WMD in Iraq was Saddam's attempt to purchase aluminum tubes. The path to that revelation was circuitous. In his August 26, 2002, speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vice President Cheney did not mention the tubes to justify the conclusion that "[w]e now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons." Instead he argued that "we now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Among other sources, we've gotten this from the firsthand testimony of defectors—including Saddam's own son-in-law, who was subsequently murdered at Saddam's direction."<sup>48</sup> Since Saddam had had his son-in-law assassinated in 1996, two years before inspectors left Iraq,<sup>49</sup> an attentive reader could know that any evidence gotten from that source was outdated.

On September 8 on *Meet the Press*, Cheney disclosed the supposedly strong new evidence, freshly revealed that morning in the *New York Times* by the credulous Judith Miller and a colleague: the aluminum tubes. In that context the vice president also reasserted the claim of the Nashville speech, saying, "he has reconstituted his nuclear program."<sup>50</sup> If the case for nuclear use of the aluminum tubes was so weak that the president had to progressively dilute the



claim in coming months, one might reasonably have asked, Why should one grant that the other “secret” evidence was any stronger?

### 5. *Admissions that Evidence Is Fragmentary*

For a brief period before the threat of a mushroom cloud made its September 8, 2002, appearance in the rhetoric of administration officials, some in the White House made the argument that it was what the United States didn’t know (and by implication not what it did know) that created concern about Iraq. Knight Ridder reporter Jonathan Landay reported on September 6 of that year in an article titled “Lack of Hard Evidence of Iraqi Weapons Worries Top U.S. Officials” that

[t]he administration’s failure to present hard evidence publicly has cost it significant support on Iraq from the American public and Congress. Many U.S. allies and other nations oppose an attack.

Yet it is precisely the absence of specific evidence that seems to have President Bush so worried about Iraq’s capabilities.

“The things that we know that we don’t know are part of the president’s calculation and would have to be part of the Congress’ calculation if we respond to this,” Senator Robert Bennett, R-Utah, said after a classified briefing by Rumsfeld on Wednesday.<sup>51</sup>

At key moments thereafter administration representatives essentially conceded that parts of their case consisted of a patchwork of inconclusive evidence tied together with assumptions. On *Meet the Press*, September 8, 2002, for example, the vice president told Tim Russert,

[W]e have to assume there’s more there than we know. What we know is just bits and pieces we gather through the intelligence system. But we—you never—nobody ever mails you the entire plan or—that rarely happens. It certainly has not happened in this case. So we have to deal with these bits and pieces, and try to put them together in a mosaic to understand what’s going on. But we do know, with absolute certainty, that he is using his procurement system to acquire the equipment he needs in order to enrich uranium to build a nuclear weapon.<sup>52</sup>

In the same program the vice president noted,

We have a tendency—I don’t know if it’s part of the part [*sic*] of the American character—to say, “Well, we’ll sit down and we’ll evaluate the evidence. We’ll draw a conclusion.” But we always think in terms that we’ve got all the evidence.

Here, we don't have all the evidence. We have 10 percent, 20 percent, 30 percent. We don't know how much. We know we have a part of the picture. And that part of the picture tells us that he is, in fact, actively and aggressively seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>53</sup>

Powell made a comparable point in his speech to the UN Security Council in February 2003 when he said, "What you will see is an accumulation of facts and disturbing patterns of behavior."<sup>54</sup>

*If they believed Saddam aided the September 11th terrorist attacks, the second congressional resolution was unnecessary.*

In the buildup to the war in Iraq, the Bush administration insinuated but did not directly assert a relationship between Saddam and September 11th. There are qualifications or reservations in each of the statements hinting at a link. They had "pretty well confirmed" that in 2001 one of the hijackers, Mohamed Atta, had met in Prague with an Iraqi officer, Cheney told Tim Russert on *Meet the Press* in December 2001. When next the vice president asserted the Prague meeting he added "apparently" and "we have reporting" to the claim:

We've seen in connection with the hijackers, of course, Mohamed Atta, who was the lead hijacker, did apparently travel to Prague on a number of occasions. And on at least one occasion, we have reporting that places him in Prague with a senior Iraqi intelligence official a few months before the attack on the World Trade Center.<sup>55</sup>

In the speech in Cincinnati on October 7, 2003, that was carried to the nation on the cable networks MSNBC, CNN, and Fox, Bush did not make the tie directly back to September 11th either when he asserted that a "senior al Qaeda leader" had been given medical treatment in Baghdad, or when he suggested that the contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda "go back a decade" and include Iraq's training "Al Qaida members in bomb making and poisons and deadly gasses."<sup>56</sup> Nor did Secretary of State Powell explicitly make the tie to 9/11 when he said at the UN, "Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida lieutenants" and noted that "[1]ast year an Al Qaida associate bragged that the situation in Iraq was, quote, 'good,' that Baghdad could be transited quickly."<sup>57</sup>

And in his letter to the Congress in March 2003, the president describes the forthcoming war in the weasel phrase "consistent with." "*Consistent with* the United States and other countries continuing to take the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those

nations, organiza-tions [*sic*], or persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001”<sup>58</sup> (emphasis added).

The careful phrasing is compatible with the notion that the administration knew that it could not make the case for a direct link. Moreover, had the administration been able to tie Saddam and September 11th or to establish that Iraq harbored September 11th terrorists or aided the terrorist attack, it would not have required the second congressional resolution to initiate that war. In response to the attacks of September 11th, on September 14, 2001, Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the president “to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons *he determines* planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons”<sup>59</sup> (emphasis added).

The inclusion of “he determines” is rhetorically interesting for two reasons. First, it gives George W. Bush responsibility for determining both who “planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks” and which organizations or persons harbored them. Second, it specifies that (whatever he determines) the authorization is limited to those who harbor organizations or persons who “planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001.”

If Saddam Hussein aided the terrorist attacks of September 11th or harbored those who did, the resolution authorized the war with Iraq. The fact that President Bush sought a second authorization to intervene in Iraq may have constituted a tacit admission from an administration not ordinarily reluctant to act without explicit congressional authorization that the implied but not stated links between Saddam and September 11th were either not strong enough or not persuasive enough to warrant the weakest verb in the authorizing sequence—“aided.”

In sum, President Bush either uncritically read whatever was handed him by his speechwriters without taking notice of the changes in rhetoric over time or was aware of the weaknesses of his case. The same can be argued about others in the administration.

Why then did the administration categorically assert that Saddam had WMD? Perhaps the Bush team believed that Saddam had WMD and was confident that they would be found after the invasion but also knew that the case could not be proven beforehand. Perhaps the Bush administration suffered from a confirmation bias and as a result thought it had proven its case when instead it was selectively and uncritically embracing only the evidence that supported its preconceptions. Perhaps, for whatever reason,

investigative instincts, skepticism, and fidelity to fact are not hallmarks of this presidency.

Either the capacity to engage in self-deception or the disposition to deceive was on display when the vice president was on CNBC's *Capital Report* on June 17, 2004. There Gloria Borger reminded Cheney what he had said about Mohammed Atta's visit to Prague. "You have said in the past that it was, quote, 'pretty well confirmed.'" Cheney responded, "No, I never said that," and then reiterated "I never said that" and then "absolutely not. What I said was the Czech intelligence service reported after 9/11 that Atta had been in Prague on April 9 of 2001, where he allegedly met with an Iraqi Intelligence Official. We have never been able to confirm that nor have we been able to knock it down, we just don't know."<sup>60</sup> On *Meet the Press*, Cheney actually said in response to a guest that what the Czech interior minister had said was, "since you and I last talked, Tim, of course, was that report that—it's been pretty well confirmed that he [Atta] did go to Prague . . ." What was left open in the statement to Russert was not whether Atta had gone to Prague ("it's been pretty well confirmed . . .") but what Atta did at the meeting. "Now, what the purpose of that was, what transpired between them, we simply don't know at this point, but that's clearly an avenue that we want to pursue."<sup>61</sup>

Four post-intervention instances suggest that President Bush, too, is capable of tenaciously clinging to and publicly relaying misinformation even in the face of direct evidence that it is false. In a fall 2005 report to the Senate Intelligence Committee, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency "repudiated the claim that there were prewar ties between Saddam Hussein's government and an operative of Al Qaeda, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi . . ."<sup>62</sup> From fall 2005 until September 8, 2006, the potentially explosive report was kept under wraps. The finding was problematic for the Bush administration because in his 2003 State of the Union address President Bush had told the nation and the world that the link existed.<sup>63</sup> In his speech to the UN Security Council, Secretary of State Colin Powell also used the purported tie to build the case for the war in Iraq.<sup>64</sup>

The October 2005 CIA report is of interest to me because it demonstrates that even after the CIA dismissed the link, President Bush persisted in asserting it. Whereas in October 2005 the CIA concluded that Saddam Hussein's "regime did not have a relationship, harbor, or turn a blind eye toward Zarqawi and his associates,"<sup>65</sup> on August 21, 2006, President Bush reiterated, "imagine a world in which you had Saddam Hussein who had the capacity to make a weapon of mass destruction, who was paying suiciders to kill innocent life, who would—who had [note the verbal leakage] relations with Zarqawi. Imagine what the world would be like with him in power. The idea is to try to help change the Middle East."<sup>66</sup>

The 43rd president showed a similar disregard for fact in his postwar accounts of the justification for intervention. Key to that Bush narrative is the notion that Saddam Hussein refused to permit UN inspectors to determine whether he still held stockpiles of prohibited weapons. After the fact, with no stockpiles located, President Bush continued to assert that “he wouldn’t let them [the UN inspectors] in,”<sup>67</sup> that “he [Saddam Hussein] chose to deny inspectors,”<sup>68</sup> and that “[w]hen the United Nations Security Council gave him one final chance to disclose and disarm, or face serious consequences, he refused to take that final opportunity.”<sup>69</sup> That is, of course, untrue. Before the U.S.-led invasion, Saddam had permitted inspectors to reenter Iraq. And the information they were gathering was calling into question the accuracy of some of the key evidence justifying war.

For example, on the issue of mobile labs, Hans Blix, executive chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Committee (UNMOVIC), told the UN, “As I noted on 14 February [2003], intelligence authorities have claimed that weapons of mass destruction are moved around Iraq by trucks and, in particular, that there are mobile production units for biological weapons. The Iraqi side states that such activities do not exist. Several inspections have taken place at declared and undeclared sites in relation to mobile production facilities. Food testing mobile laboratories and mobile workshops have been seen, as well as large containers with seed processing equipment. No evidence of proscribed activities have [*sic*] so far been found. Iraq is expected to assist in the development of credible ways to conduct random checks of ground transportation.”<sup>70</sup>

And once permitted back in Iraq, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors “had rushed to the country’s Nasser 81 mm rocket production facility and found 13,000 complete rockets—all made from the same aluminum tubes that the administration had been claiming were for nuclear centrifuges.”<sup>71</sup>

Nor is the president correct when he suggests that “everybody thought there was [*sic*] weapons of mass destruction [in Iraq].”<sup>72</sup> Former weapons inspectors such as Scott Ritter publicly raised doubts as did inspectors Hans Blix and Mohamed El-Baradei.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, the day after the 2006 midterm elections President Bush admitted that he had deceived the press the previous week about his intentions to fire Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. At the press conference in which the president revealed that it was time for new leadership at the Pentagon, a reporter noted that “[l]ast week you told us that Secretary Rumsfeld will be staying on.” Bush responded,

Right. No, you and Hunt and Keil came in the Oval Office, and Hunt asked me the question one week before the campaign, and basically it was, are you going to do something about Rumsfeld and the Vice President? And my answer was, they're going to stay on. And the reason why is I didn't want to inject a major decision about this war in the final days of a campaign. And so the only way to answer that question and to get you on to another question was to give you that answer.<sup>74</sup>

The president's recollection of his answer is imprecise. What he had told the reporters was that "he intended to keep Mr. Rumsfeld at the Pentagon and Mr. Cheney in the vice presidency until he leaves office in 2009."<sup>75</sup>

A third set of claims bolsters the notion that although the public case for war pivoted on the presence and disposition to use or share weapons of mass destruction, that was not the justification that propelled the Bush/Cheney decision to go to war. After both had conceded that WMD had not been found and that they possessed no evidence that Saddam was involved in 9/11, each suggested that even if he had known there were no WMD he still would have taken the country to war.<sup>76</sup>

By contrast, when Secretary of State Colin Powell was asked by the editors of the *New York Times* whether he "personally" would have supported the war "if weapons of mass destruction had not been at issue," the secretary "smiled, thrust his hand out and said, 'It was good to meet you.'"<sup>77</sup> Additionally, when Powell was asked by a *Washington Post* reporter whether he would have recommended the invasion had he been told by George Tenet "that there [were] no stockpiles," Powell responded, "I don't know because it was the stockpiles that presented the final little piece that made it more of a real and present danger and threat to the region and to the world." When pressed he added, "The absence of a stockpile changes the political calculus. It changes the answer you get with the little formula I laid out."<sup>78</sup>

Was the war, as Bush argued in retrospect on July 30, 2003, based on a "thorough" body of intelligence that was "solid" and "sound"?<sup>79</sup> In this essay I have argued from the rhetoric of the Bush administration that the public could have known and that those within the administration either knew or should have known as well that the evidence did not satisfy a high standard. Taken together, the need for a second congressional resolution, the Freudian slips, sliding wording to weaken claims and lessen accountability, the assertions of secret knowledge, the use of rhetorical questions, and the concessions of the patchwork nature of the case suggest that those crafting the administration's messages either were aware or should have been aware of the fault lines in their case.

## NOTES

1. Porter Goss and Jane Harman to George Tenet, September 25, 2003, U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 3–6 (available at [www.jar2.com/2/Intel/CIA/Tenet](http://www.jar2.com/2/Intel/CIA/Tenet)).
2. David Barstow, William Broad, and Jeff Gerth, “How White House Embraced Suspect Iraq Arms Intelligence,” *New York Times*, October 3, 2004, sec. 1, 1.
3. “Statement of Donald H. Rumsfeld, U.S. Secretary of Defense, Before the House Armed Services Committee on Iraq,” United States House of Representatives, House Armed Services Committee, September 18, 2002, <http://www.house.gov/hasc/openingstatementsandpressreleases/107thcongress/02-09-18rumsfeld.html> (accessed October 5, 2006).
4. “U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses the U.N. Security Council,” The White House, February 5, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030205-1.html> (accessed August 30, 2006).
5. “U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses the U.N. Security Council.”
6. Dick Cheney, interview by Tim Russert, *Meet the Press*, NBC, September 8, 2002, <http://www.nexis.com/> (accessed August 30, 2006).
7. “Vice President Speaks at VFW 103rd National Convention,” The White House, August 26, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html> (accessed September 11, 2006).
8. “Address to the Nation on Iraq from Cincinnati, Ohio, October 7th, 2002,” The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=73139&st=&st1=> (accessed August 30, 2006).
9. “Address to the Nation on Iraq, March 17th, 2003,” The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63713> (accessed August 30, 2006).
10. This quotation appears in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Boston Globe*, but not in the posted transcript of the December 5, 2002, press briefing by Ari Fleisher. Because it appears in at least three independently written news reports, I assume that it was omitted or deleted. We have asked the White House staff for an explanation. See David E. Sanger, “Threats and Responses: Inspections; U.S. Tells Iraq It Must Reveal Weapons Sites,” *New York Times*, December 6, 2002, sec. A, 1, <http://www.nexis.com/> (accessed October 6, 2006); Bob Drogin and Doyle McManis, “The World; Focus Shifts to Iraq’s Arms List; U.S. and U.N. Analysts Are Set to Assess How Baghdad Accounts for Its Alleged Illicit Weapons,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 2002, part 1, 1, <http://www.nexis.com/> (accessed October 6, 2006); Anne E. Kornblut and John Donnelly, “US Asserts an Iraqi Arsenal as Deadline Nears,” *Boston Globe*, December 6, 2002, A1, <http://www.nexis.com/> (accessed October 6, 2006).
11. Leakage occurs when a behavior or cue “mistakenly reveals the truth.” See Paul Ekman, *Telling Lies: Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics, and Marriage* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 39; see also Miron Zuckerman, Bella M. DePaulo, and Robert Rosenthal, “Verbal and Nonverbal Communication of Deception,” in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, ed. Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 1–59. These cues include speech latency, mistakes in speech, delayed responses, and generalizations in the use of speech (Michael J. Cody, Peter J. Marston, and Myrna Foster, “Deception: Paralinguistic and Verbal Leakage,” in *Communication Yearbook* 8, ed. R. N. Bostrom and B. H. Westley [1987]: 464–90). For Freud, what has become known as the Freudian slip was a verbal

- expression of repressed thoughts emerging from anxiety (see Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, ed. James Strachey, trans. Alan Tyson [New York: W. W. Norton, 1965], 53–105.). Social scientists define a Freudian slip as “unconscious influence [being] revealed by errors” in speech (Larry L. Jacoby and Colleen M. Kelley, “A Process-Dissociation Framework for Investigating Unconscious Influences: Freudian Slips, Projective Tests, Subliminal Perception, and Signal Detection Theory,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 1 [December 1992]: 174), which “represent breakdowns in normal language encoding” (Michael T. Motley and Bernard J. Baars, “Semantic Bias Effect on the Outcomes of Verbal Slips,” *Cognition* 4 [1976]: 177).
12. Condoleezza Rice, interview by Wolf Blitzer, *Late Edition*, CNN, September 8, 2002, <http://global.factiva.com/> (accessed August 30, 2006).
  13. General Tommy Franks with Malcolm McConnell, *American Soldier* (New York: Regan Books, 2004), 562.
  14. Dick Cheney, interview by Tim Russert, *Meet the Press*, NBC, March 16, 2003, <http://global.factiva.com/> (accessed September 11, 2006).
  15. See Michael Isikoff and David Corn, *Hubris* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006), 38–39.
  16. “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, January 28th, 2003,” The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29645> (accessed August 29, 2006).
  17. House Committee on International Relations, *U.S. Policy Toward Iraq: Administration Views*, 107th Cong., 2nd sess., 2002, 38, [http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa81814.000/hfa81814\\_0.HTM](http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa81814.000/hfa81814_0.HTM) (accessed August 30, 2006).
  18. “Address to the Nation on Iraq from Cincinnati, Ohio, October 7th, 2002.”
  19. “Remarks Following a Meeting with Congressional Leaders and an Exchange with Reporters, October 1st, 2002,” The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=62567&st=&st1=> (accessed August 30, 2006).
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  21. “Exchange with Reporters in Crawford, Texas, December 31, 2003,” The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=263> (accessed August 30, 2006).
  22. “Press Briefing by Ari Fleischer,” The White House, December 5, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/12/20021205-7.html> (accessed October 2, 2006).
  23. “Press Briefing by Ari Fleischer,” The White House, July 14, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/07/20030714-4.html> (accessed October 16, 2006).
  24. Condoleezza Rice, interview by Wolf Blitzer, *Late Edition*, CNN, September 8, 2002.
  25. Condoleezza Rice, interview by Wolf Blitzer, *Late Edition*, CNN, September 8, 2002.
  26. Condoleezza Rice, “Why We Know Iraq Is Lying,” *New York Times*, January 23, 2003, sec. A, 25, <http://www.nexis.com/> (accessed September 27, 2006).
  27. “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, January 28th, 2003.”
  28. “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, January 28th, 2003.”
  29. “Press Briefing by Ari Fleischer,” The White House, December 5, 2002.



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31. Dick Cheney, interview by Tim Russert, *Meet the Press*, NBC, March 16, 2003.
32. "U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses the U.N. Security Council."
33. "Press Briefing by Ari Fleischer," The White House, December 2, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/2002/12/20021202-6.html> (accessed September 13, 2006).
34. "Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, September 12th, 2002," The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=64069> (accessed August 30, 2006).
35. "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, January 28th, 2003."
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39. Condoleezza Rice, interview by Wolf Blitzer, *Late Edition*, CNN, July 29, 2001, <http://www.nexis.com/> (accessed October 16, 2006).
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41. "Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters in Crawford, August 16th, 2002," The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=64679> (accessed September 15, 2006).
42. "Vice President Honors Veterans of Korean War," The White House, August 29, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020829-5.html> (accessed September 15, 2006).
43. Colin Powell, interview by David Frost, *BBC Breakfast with Frost*, BBC, September 8, 2002 (recorded August 29, 2002 in the State Department, Washington, D.C.), [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/breakfast\\_with\\_frost/244613.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/breakfast_with_frost/244613.stm) (accessed November 8, 2006).
44. Donald Rumsfeld, interview by Bob Schieffer, *Face the Nation*, CBS, September 8, 2002, <http://www.nexis.com/> (accessed August 30, 2006).
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48. "Vice President Speaks at VFW 103rd National Convention," The White House, August 26, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html> (accessed September 11, 2006).
49. See Douglas Jehl, "Iraqi Defectors Killed 3 Days After Returning," *New York Times*, February 24, 1996, sec. 1, 1, <http://w3.nexis.com/> (accessed October 19, 2006).

50. Dick Cheney, interview by Tim Russert, *Meet the Press*, NBC, September 8, 2002.
51. Jonathan S. Landay, "Lack of Hard Evidence of Iraqi Weapons Worries Top U.S. Officials," Knight Ridder, September 6, 2002, [http://www.realcities.com/mld/krwashington/news/special\\_packages/iraq/intelligence/11922692.htm](http://www.realcities.com/mld/krwashington/news/special_packages/iraq/intelligence/11922692.htm) (accessed October 11, 2006).
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54. "U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses the U.N. Security Council."
55. Dick Cheney, interview by Tim Russert, *Meet the Press*, NBC, September 8, 2002.
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57. "U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses the U.N. Security Council."
58. "Presidential Letter," The White House, March 21, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030321-5.html> (accessed October 16, 2006).
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62. Mark Mazzetti, "C.I.A. Said to Find No Hussein Link to Terror Chief," *New York Times*, September 9, 2006, sec. A, 1.
63. See "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, January 28th, 2003":

Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of Al Qaida. Secretly and without fingerprints, he could provide one of his hidden weapons to terrorists or help them develop their own.

64. See "U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses the U.N. Security Council":

But what I want to bring to your attention today is the potentially much more sinister nexus between Iraq and the Al Qaida terrorist network, a nexus that combines classic terrorist organizations and modern methods of murder. Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, an associated in collaborator [*sic*] of Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida lieutenants. . . .

Zarqawi's activities are not confined to this small corner of north east Iraq. He traveled to Baghdad in May 2002 for medical treatment, staying in the capital of Iraq for two months while he recuperated to fight another day.

During this stay, nearly two dozen extremists converged on Baghdad and established a base of operations there. These Al Qaida affiliates, based in Baghdad, now coordinate the movement of people, money and supplies into and throughout Iraq for his network, and they've now been operating freely in the capital for more than eight months.

Iraqi officials deny accusations of ties with Al Qaida. These denials are simply not credible. Last year an Al Qaida associate bragged that the situation in Iraq was, quote, "good," that Baghdad could be transited quickly. . . .

As my colleagues around this table and as the citizens they represent in Europe know, Zarqawi's terrorism is not confined to the Middle East. Zarqawi and his network have plotted terrorist actions against countries, including France, Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany and Russia. . . .

We are not surprised that Iraq is harboring Zarqawi and his subordinates. This understanding builds on decades long experience with respect to ties between Iraq and Al Qaida. . . .

Some believe, some claim these contacts do not amount to much. They say Saddam Hussein's secular tyranny and Al Qaida's religious tyranny do not mix. I am not comforted by this thought. Ambition and hatred are enough to bring Iraq and Al Qaida together, enough so Al Qaida could learn how to build more sophisticated bombs and learn how to forge documents, and enough so that Al Qaida could turn to Iraq for help in acquiring expertise on weapons of mass destruction. . . .

With this track record, Iraqi denials of supporting terrorism take the place alongside the other Iraqi denials of weapons of mass destruction. It is all a web of lies.

65. CIA, *Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the Former Iraqi Regime*, October 25, 2005, ii, quoted in Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Postwar Findings About Iraq's WMD Programs and Links to Terrorism and How They Compare with Prewar Assessments*, 109th Cong., 2nd sess., 2006, 92, <http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/phaseiiaaccuracy.pdf> (accessed September 11, 2006).
66. "The President's News Conference, August 21st, 2006," The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=614> (accessed September 11, 2006).
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