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the hell out of us about
the threat of Hussein,
and almost none of it
was true.

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[Jihad Vs. McWorld](#)

Benjamin Barber's
seminal argument that

We Told You So

By [Rahul Mahajan](#), [AlterNet](#). Posted [April 6, 2005](#).

The latest WMD report merely confirms what anti-war activists were claiming all along -- way before the invasion of Iraq.

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Last week, the "Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction" issued what may be the last in a series of in-depth reports by U.S. government on the "intelligence failures" surrounding the invasion of Iraq.

Wade through the close to 3,000 pages of these reports and one conclusion is inescapable: those of us who opposed the invasion of Iraq were right on every count.

We knew that the Bush administration's case of war was no more than a mish-mash of evasion, misdirection, and outright lies -- and we didn't need the vast

the two axial principles of our age - tribalism and globalism - clash at every point except one: they may both be threatening to democracy.

RECOMMENDED SITES

[United for Peace](#)

Web resource put together by a collaboration of national and international peace and social justice organizations led by Global Exchange.

[Middle East Research and Information Project](#)

The Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) is considered the leading source of authoritative information and analysis on the Middle East.

[Education for Peace in Iraq](#)

Working to improve conditions in Iraq through education and advocacy, not war.

[AntiWar.com](#)

A libertarian anti-war site that offers breaking news, analysis, and opinion on the war on Iraq.

[UNMOVIC](#)

The U.N. organization that monitors and verifies Iraqi compliance with Security Council resolutions banning the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction.

[Who Is Saddam Hussein?](#)

A BBC profile of the Iraqi dictator, accompanied by in-depth background information on Iraq.

[US Labor Against the War](#)

Major unions and labor councils across the land have passed

resources of these investigative commissions to figure it out. The evidence – be it in the form of intelligence leaks, news reporting (though less often in the U.S. and rarely on the front page), or congressional testimony -- was out in the open for all to see.

The al Qaeda Connection

In the lead up to the war, Bush administration officials constantly insinuated a connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda, and even the 9/11 attacks. Vice President Cheney, over and over again, referred to a cock-and-bull story about a Prague meeting between Mohammed Atta and the Iraqi intelligence. The Atta story was debunked in *The New York Times* as early as October 2002 – more than four months before the invasion.

The other "damning" piece of evidence of this al Qaeda connection was a sighting of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Baghdad. As it turns out, the only person who helped out Zarqawi was George Bush. By eliminating Saddam, the U.S. has created a power vacuum that has made Zarqawi a major player in post-war Iraq. There was never any evidence emerged that he was getting resources, assistance, or cover from the old regime. The 9/11 commission later confirmed that there was absolutely no evidence linking Iraq to al Qaeda.

The N-Bomb Scare

Starting in August 2002, Dick Cheney and others raised the specter of Iraq armed with a nuclear bomb, ready to take out New York or Atlanta. On March 16, 2003, Cheney even said, of Saddam, "We believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons."

According to the WMD Commission report, the CIA believed that Iraq had reconstituted its nuclear weapon program – which is still quite different from actually having nuclear weapons. But even this modified judgment was based on controversial evidence, such as the presence of a certain kind of aluminum tubes. As news reports before the invasion show, intelligence analysts were split over these tubes; where the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency thought they were designed to serve as uranium-enrichment centrifuges, the State Department and the Department of Energy were convinced they were conventional artillery shells.

The latter were right, but we didn't need to wait for the WMD report to tell us that. The International Atomic Energy Association's Mohammed el Baradei told *The Washington Post* exactly that in January, 2003: "It may be technically possible that the tubes could be used to enrich uranium, but you would have to believe that Iraq deliberately ordered the wrong stock and intended to spend a great deal of time and money reworking each piece." He repeated his assessments with even greater force in a report to the U.N. on March 7 – two weeks before the invasion.

There is, of course, also the now long-debunked claim made by President Bush in his January, 2003 State of Union speech – the claim that Iraq had been trying to buy uranium from Niger.

In February 2003, IAEA inspectors – having finally gained access to the Niger

resolutions in support of inspections and advocating efforts for a peaceful resolution.

Mother Jones' War Watch

The hell-raising politics magazine's new daily source for up-to-date news and commentary about the ongoing war.

documents – pointed out that they were very crude forgeries, a fact that was covered in some newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune*, well before the war. The Bush administration did not, however, abandon its claim until six months later, when former Ambassador Joe Wilson revealed that the administration knew there was no evidence of any attempt to buy uranium a full year before the Bush speech.

What WMDs?

As the WMD commission report reveals, when it came to Saddam's much-touted biological weapons program, the Bush administration relied entirely on "evidence" provided by an Iraqi defector code-named "Curveball." He provided over 100 detailed reports, claiming, for example, that Iraq had mobile biological weapons laboratories.

Opponents of the war repeatedly challenged these claims, pointing out that such labs if they existed would be unbelievably dangerous. Moreover, there was no evidence of their existence since U.N. inspectors on the ground found little proof to back his assertions. At the time, Curveball's German handlers warned U.S. intelligence analysts that he was unreliable and most likely an outright liar. He even showed up drunk for a meeting. Although several reports of his unreliability were sent up the chain of command, the administration continued to treat his pronouncements as gospel.

The Bush administration's claims about Iraq's biological warfare capabilities also reveal that the errors surrounding the decision to invade Iraq entailed not just "faulty intelligence," but outright deception. How else to characterize Bush's claim on Oct. 7, 2002, that Saddam was planning to "target" the United States with his vaunted "unmanned aerial vehicles? As his own Air Force experts had pointed out at the time, these vehicles only had a limited range of which had a claimed range of only 400 miles and were not even big enough to carry such a payload.

Name the Elephant

For the most part, the latest report does not tell us anything we did not already know. Since early 2004, when the David Kay report offered the initial findings of the Iraq Survey Group, various government investigations have confirmed that Iraq simply was not a threat to the United States. There was the Senate Intelligence Committee and the 9/11 Commission reports issued in July, followed in October by the Duelfer report that summed up the final conclusions of the Iraq Survey Group.

Yet none of these reports – including this latest version – is willing to acknowledge the proverbial elephant in the debate over Iraq, i.e. the complicity of the Bush administration in creating this so-called "intelligence failure." The WMD Commission concludes that intelligence analysts found what they wanted to find rather than being guided by the facts. But it carefully makes a point of any wrongdoing on the part of the administration: "The analysts who worked Iraqi weapons issues universally agreed that in no instance did political pressure cause them to skew or alter any of their analytical judgments."

Similarly, the commission reserves particularly harsh criticism for the way the president's "Daily Brief" is prepared, characterizing them as "more alarmist and

less nuanced" than longer reports, such as the famously flawed October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate. Their "attention-grabbing headlines and drumbeat of repetition" supposedly gave top officials the impression that dramatic claims were much better sourced and heavily corroborated than, in fact, they were.

The commission clearly does its best to lend credence to the Bush White House's self-serving rationale: a scaremongering intelligence community stampeded the administration into war. How odd that a president who went on vacation when confronted with an earlier such "attention-grabbing headline" in an Aug. 6, 2001 PDB -- "Bin Laden Determined to Attack in U.S." -- should be so easily scared.

Those of us who knew better in opposing the invasion of Iraq know better now. We know that "intelligence failure" is just a neat rhetorical device to shift the blame from the coterie of top officials who deliberately deceived us into a war to the intelligence agencies who were pressured to come up with those lies. The WMD commission was not created to help us arrive at the truth, but to head off any chance of a serious investigation into the administration's wrongdoings.

So in the end, the commission did its job well. It's unfortunate that its job was a political cover-up.

Rahul Mahajan is publisher of the blog [Empire Notes](#). He has been to occupied Iraq twice and reported from Fallujah during the April 2004 siege. His most recent book is [Full Spectrum Dominance: U.S. Power in Iraq and Beyond](#). He can be reached at rahul@empirenotes.org.

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But you know what they'll say...

Posted by: gazevans on Apr 6, 2005 3:25 AM

"It was worth it to get rid of Saddam". You'd think that they could come up with a better excuse. Iraq was less of a threat than my cat - and he's a pussy. The Elite Guard? What happened to those fearsome troops? 45 minutes? Whatever. You just freaked out, guys...it happens to everyone now and again. It's not too late to jump OFF the bandwagon. You wont look silly. Honest.

"But, but...think of all the bad stuff he did: he had to go!". Erm, he'd been better behaved in the run-up to Gulf War Episode II: Revenge of the Bush. He was no saint, obviously, but the timing of the invasion, coupled with that lame excuse just doesn't make enough sense.

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