

Browse the City Pages  > Keyword Search:

> Category Jump:

NEWS & FEATURES

COVER STORY . VOL 24 #1182 . PUBLISHED 7/30/03

BRING 'EM ON! by Steve Perry

 E-MAIL

 PRINT

The Bush administration's Top 40 Lies about war and terrorism



PHOTO BY JOSHUA KARSTEN

Bring 'em On!

By Steve Perry

Editor's note: In the interest of relative brevity I've stinted on citing and quoting sources in some of the items below. You can find [links to news stories that elaborate on each of these items](#) at my online Bush Wars column, www.bushwarsblog.com.

1) The administration was not bent on war with Iraq from 9/11

HOME CHANNELS

- ▶ Web Logs
- ▶ News & Features
- ▶ Restaurants
- ▶ Movies
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Performing Arts
- ▶ Books
- ▶ Art
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ Calendar
- ▶ Letters
- ▶ Article Archive
- ▶ Savage Love
- ▶ Horoscope
- ▶ Contact Us

HAVE A TIP?

Send an e-mail to tips@citypages.com, or contact one of our [editorial staffers](#).

CP NEWSLETTER

Stay up-to-date with *City Pages*. Signing up is simple, and you can opt out anytime. Give it a try...

- [SIGN UP NOW](#)
- [SEE A SAMPLE](#)

BEST OF THE TWIN CITIES





- ▶ Home
- ▶ The City Gritty
- ▶ Arts & Entertainment
- ▶ Out & About
- ▶ Bought & Sold
- ▶ Restaurants
- ▶ Foodstuff
- ▶ Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll
- ▶ Readers' Poll
- ▶ Search

AD INDEX

- ▶ Bars and Clubs
- ▶ Concerts, etc.
- ▶ Restaurants
- ▶ Retail
- ▶

MN MUSIC DIR.

- ▶ Home
- ▶ Bands
- ▶ Solo Artists
- ▶ Industry & Services
- ▶ Get Listed!

onward.

Throughout the year leading up to war, the White House publicly maintained that the U.S. took weapons inspections seriously, that diplomacy would get its chance, that Saddam had the opportunity to prevent a U.S. invasion. The most pungent and concise evidence to the contrary comes from the president's own mouth. According to *Time's* March 31 road-to-war story, Bush popped in on national security adviser Condi Rice one day in March 2002, interrupting a meeting on UN sanctions against Iraq. Getting a whiff of the subject matter, W peremptorily waved his hand and told her, "Fuck Saddam. We're taking him out." Clare Short, Tony Blair's former secretary for international development, recently lent further credence to the anecdote. She told the London Guardian that Bush and Blair made a secret pact a few months afterward, in the summer of 2002, to invade Iraq in either February or March of this year.

Last fall CBS News obtained meeting notes taken by a Rumsfeld aide at 2:40 on the afternoon of September 11, 2001. The notes indicate that Rumsfeld wanted the "best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] at same time. Not only UBL [Usama bin Laden]... Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not."

Rumsfeld's deputy Paul Wolfowitz, the Bushmen's leading intellectual light, has long been rabid on the subject of Iraq. He reportedly told *Vanity Fair* writer Sam Tanenhaus off the record that he believes Saddam was connected not only to bin Laden and 9/11, but the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

The Bush administration's foreign policy plan was not based on September 11, or terrorism; those events only brought to the forefront a radical plan for U.S. control of the post-Cold War world that had been taking shape since the closing days of the first Bush presidency. Back then a small claque of planners, led by Wolfowitz, generated a

See also in
City Pages:



THE EMPEROR HAS NO FLIGHT SUIT

In recent weeks, the press and some Democrats have finally taken up a critical White House deception about Iraq and uranium. What took them so long? And what about all the other lies?



HIGH CRIMES & MISDEMEANORS

Print out your very own abridged edition of the Bush administration's Top 40 lies about war and terrorism.

- ADOBE PDF (467K)
- STANDARD GIF (66K)

You will need the [FREE Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to view the PDF file.

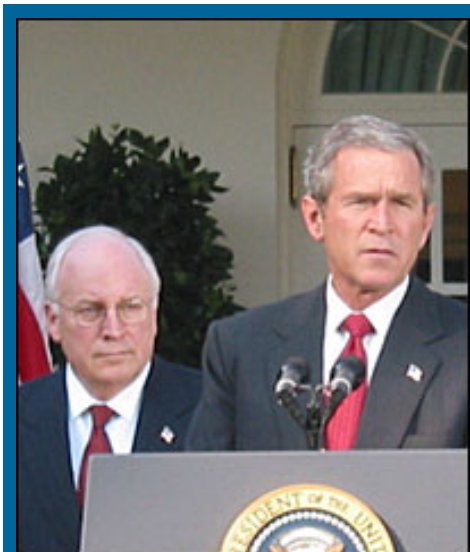
draft document known as Defense Planning Guidance, which envisioned a U.S. that took advantage of its lone-superpower status to consolidate American control of the world both militarily and economically, to the point where no other nation could ever reasonably hope to challenge the U.S. Toward that end it envisioned what we now call "preemptive" wars waged to reset the geopolitical table.

After a copy of DPG was leaked to the New York Times, subsequent drafts were rendered a little less frank, but the basic idea never changed. In 1997 Wolfowitz and his true believers--Richard Perle, William Kristol, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld--formed an organization called Project for the New American Century to carry their cause forward. And though they all flocked around the Bush administration from the start, W never really embraced their plan until the events of September 11 left him casting around for a foreign policy plan.

2) The invasion of Iraq was based on a reasonable belief that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction that posed a threat to the U.S., a belief supported by available intelligence evidence.

Paul Wolfowitz admitted to *Vanity Fair* that weapons of mass destruction were not really the main reason for invading Iraq: "The decision to highlight weapons of mass destruction as the main justification for going to war in Iraq was taken for bureaucratic reasons.... [T]here were many other important factors as well." Right. But they did not come under the heading of self-defense.

We now know how the Bushmen gathered their prewar intelligence: They set out to patch together their case for invading Iraq and ignored everything that contradicted it. In the end, this required that Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, et al. set aside the findings of analysts from the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency (the Pentagon's own spy bureau) and stake their claim largely on the basis of isolated, anecdotal testimony from handpicked Iraqi defectors. (See #5, Ahmed Chalabi.) But the administration did not just listen to the defectors; it promoted their



Ventriloquist Dick Cheney in a rare appearance with his most famous work

PHOTO BY SGT. TONY DELEON

claims in the press as a means of enlisting public opinion. The only reason so many Americans thought there was a connection between Saddam and al Qaeda in the first place was that the Bushmen trotted out Iraqi defectors making these sorts of claims to every major media outlet that would listen.

Here is the verdict of Gregory Thielman, the recently retired head of the State Department's intelligence office: "I believe the Bush administration did not provide an accurate picture to the American people of the military threat posed by Iraq. This administration has had a faith-based intelligence attitude--we know the answers, give us the intelligence to support those answers." Elsewhere he has been quoted as saying, "The principal reasons that Americans did not understand the nature of the Iraqi threat in my view was the failure of senior administration officials to speak honestly about what the intelligence showed."

3) Saddam tried to buy uranium in Niger.

Lies and distortions tend to beget more lies and distortions, and here is W's most notorious case in point: Once the administration decided to issue a damage-controlling (they hoped) *mea culpa* in the matter of African uranium, they were obliged to couch it in another, more perilous lie: that the administration, and quite likely Bush himself, thought the uranium claim was true when he made it. But former acting ambassador to Iraq Joseph Wilson wrote an op-ed in the New York Times on July 6 that exploded the claim. Wilson, who traveled to Niger in 2002 to investigate the uranium claims at the behest of the CIA and Dick Cheney's office and found them to be groundless, describes what followed this way: "Although I did not file a written report, there should be at least four documents in U.S. government archives confirming my mission. The documents should include the ambassador's report of my debriefing in Niamey, a separate report written by the embassy staff, a CIA report summing up my trip, and a specific answer from the agency to the office of the vice president (this may have been delivered orally). While I have not seen any of these reports, I have spent enough time in government to know that this is standard operating procedure."

4) The aluminum tubes were proof of a nuclear program.

The very next sentence of Bush's State of the Union address was just as egregious a lie as the uranium claim, though a bit cagier in its formulation. "Our intelligence sources tell us that [Saddam] has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production." This is altogether false in its implication

(that this is the likeliest use for these materials) and may be untrue in its literal sense as well. As the London Independent summed it up recently, "The U.S. persistently alleged that Baghdad tried to buy high-strength aluminum tubes whose only use could be in gas centrifuges, needed to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons. Equally persistently, the International Atomic Energy Agency said the tubes were being used for artillery rockets. The head of the IAEA, Mohamed El Baradei, told the UN Security Council in January that *the tubes were not even suitable for centrifuges.*" [emphasis added]

5) Iraq's WMDs were sent to Syria for hiding.

Or Iran, or.... "They shipped them out!" was a rallying cry for the administration in the first few nervous weeks of finding no WMDs, but not a bit of supporting evidence has emerged.

6) The CIA was primarily responsible for any prewar intelligence errors or distortions regarding Iraq.

Don't be misled by the news that CIA director George Tenet has taken the fall for Bush's falsehoods in the State of the Uranium address. As the journalist Robert Dreyfuss wrote shortly before the war, "Even as it prepares for war against Iraq, the Pentagon is already engaged on a second front: its war against the Central Intelligence Agency. The Pentagon is bringing relentless pressure to bear on the agency to produce intelligence reports more supportive of war with Iraq. ... Morale inside the U.S. national-security apparatus is said to be low, with career staffers feeling intimidated and pressured to justify the push for war."

In short, Tenet fell on his sword when he vetted Bush's State of the Union yarns. And now he has had to get up and fall on it again.

7) An International Atomic Energy Agency report indicated that Iraq could be as little as six months from making nuclear weapons.

Alas: The claim had to be retracted when the IAEA pointed out that no such report existed.

8) Saddam was involved with bin Laden and al Qaeda in the plotting of 9/11.

One of the most audacious and well-traveled of the Bushmen's fibs, this one hangs by two of the slenderest evidentiary threads imaginable: first, anecdotal testimony by isolated, handpicked Iraqi defectors that there was an al Qaeda training camp in Iraq, a claim CIA analysts did not corroborate and that postwar U.S. military inspectors conceded did not exist; and second, old intelligence accounts of a 1991 meeting in Baghdad between a bin Laden emissary and officers from Saddam's intelligence service, which did not lead to any subsequent contact that U.S. or UK spies have ever managed to turn up. According to former State Department intelligence chief Gregory Thielman, the consensus of U.S. intelligence agencies well in advance of the war was that "there was no significant pattern of cooperation between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist operation."

9) The U.S. wants democracy in Iraq and the Middle East.

Democracy is the last thing the U.S. can afford in Iraq, as anyone who has paid attention to the state of Arab popular sentiment already realizes. Representative government in Iraq would mean the rapid expulsion of U.S. interests. Rather, the U.S. wants westernized, secular leadership regimes that will stay in pocket and work to neutralize the politically ambitious anti-Western religious sects popping up everywhere. If a little brutality and graft are required to do the job, it has never troubled the U.S. in the past. Ironically, these standards describe someone more or less like Saddam Hussein. Judging from the state of civil affairs in Iraq now, the Bush administration will no doubt be looking for a strongman again, if and when they are finally compelled to install anyone at all.

10) Ahmed Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress are a homegrown Iraqi political force, not a U.S.-sponsored front.

Chalabi is a more important bit player in the Iraq war than most people realize, and not because he was the U.S.'s failed choice to lead a post-Saddam government. It was Chalabi and his INC that funneled compliant defectors to the Bush administration, where they attested to everything the Bushmen wanted to believe about Saddam and Iraq (meaning, mainly, al Qaeda connections and WMD programs). The administration proceeded to take their dubious word over that of the combined intelligence of the CIA and DIA, which indicated that Saddam was not in the business of sponsoring foreign terrorism and posed no imminent threat to anyone.

Naturally Chalabi is despised nowadays round the halls of Langley, but it wasn't always so. The CIA built the Iraqi National Congress and

installed Chalabi at the helm back in the days following Gulf War I, when the thought was to topple Saddam by whipping up and sponsoring an internal opposition. It didn't work; from the start Iraqis have disliked and distrusted Chalabi. Moreover, his erratic and duplicitous ways have alienated practically everyone in the U.S. foreign policy establishment as well--except for Rumsfeld's Department of Defense, and therefore the White House.

11) The United States is waging a war on terror.

Practically any school child could recite the terms of the Bush Doctrine, and may have to before the Ashcroft Justice Department is finished: The global war on terror is about confronting *terrorist groups and the nations that harbor them*. The United States does not make deals with terrorists or nations where they find safe lodging.

Leave aside the blind eye that the U.S. has always cast toward Israel's actions in the territories. How are the Bushmen doing elsewhere vis-à-vis their announced principles? We can start with their fabrications and manipulations of Iraqi WMD evidence--which, in the eyes of weapons inspectors, the UN Security Council, American intelligence analysts, and the world at large, did *not* pose any imminent threat.

The events of recent months have underscored a couple more gaping violations of W's cardinal anti-terror rules. In April the Pentagon made a cooperation pact with the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK), an anti-Iranian terrorist group based in Iraq. Prior to the 1979 Iranian revolution, American intelligence blamed it for the death of several U. S. nationals in Iran.

Most glaring of all is the Bush administration's remarkable treatment of Saudi Arabia. Consider: Eleven of the nineteen September 11 hijackers were Saudis. The ruling House of Saud has longstanding and well-known ties to al Qaeda and other terrorist outfits, which it funds (read *protection money*) to keep them from making mischief at home. The May issue of *Atlantic Monthly* had a nice piece on the House of Saud that recounts these connections.

Yet the Bush government has never said boo regarding the Saudis and international terrorism. In fact, when terror bombers struck Riyadh in May, hitting compounds that housed American workers as well, Colin Powell went out of his way to avoid tarring the House of Saud: "Terrorism strikes everywhere and everyone. It is a threat to the civilized world. We will commit ourselves again to redouble our efforts to work closely with our Saudi friends and friends all around the world to go after al Qaeda." Later it was alleged that the Riyadh bombers purchased some of their ordnance from the Saudi National Guard, but neither Powell nor anyone else saw fit to revise their

statements about "our Saudi friends."

Why do the Bushmen give a pass to the Saudi terror hotbed? Because the House of Saud controls a lot of oil, and they are still (however tenuously) on our side. And that, not terrorism, is what matters most in Bush's foreign policy calculus.

While the bomb craters in Riyadh were still smoking, W held a meeting with Philippine president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Speaking publicly afterward, he outlined a deal for U.S. military aid to the Philippines in exchange for greater "cooperation" in getting American hands round the throats of Filipino terrorists. He mentioned in particular the U.S.'s longtime nemesis Abu Sayyaf--and he also singled out the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a small faction based on Mindanao, the southernmost big island in the Philippine chain.

Of course it's by purest coincidence that Mindanao is the location of Asia's richest oil reserves.

12) The U.S. has made progress against world terrorist elements, in particular by crippling al Qaeda.

A resurgent al Qaeda has been making international news since around the time of the Saudi Arabia bombings in May. The best coverage by far is that of Asia Times correspondent Syed Saleem Shahzad. According to Shahzad's detailed accounts, al Qaeda has reorganized itself along leaner, more diffuse lines, effectively dissolving itself into a coalition of localized units that mean to strike frequently, on a small scale, and in multiple locales around the world. Since claiming responsibility for the May Riyadh bombings, alleged al Qaeda communiqués have also claimed credit for some of the strikes at U.S. troops in Iraq.



Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, Bush: The truth will not set them free

PHOTO BY R.D. WARD

13) The Bush administration has made Americans safer from terror on U.S. soil.

Like the Pentagon "plan" for occupying postwar Iraq, the Department of Homeland Security is mainly a Bush administration PR dirigible untethered to anything of substance. It's a scandal waiting to happen, and the only good news for W is that it's near the back of a fairly long line of scandals waiting to happen.

On May 26 the trade magazine *Federal Computer Week* published a report on DHS's first 100 days. At that point the nerve center of Bush's domestic war on terror had only recently gotten e-mail service. As for the larger matter of creating a functioning organizational grid and, more important, a software architecture plan for integrating the enormous mass of data that DHS is supposed to process--nada. In the nearly two years since the administration announced its intention to create a cabinet-level homeland security office, nothing meaningful has been accomplished. And there are no funds to implement a network plan if they had one. According to the magazine, "Robert David Steele, an author and former intelligence officer, points out that there are at least 30 separate intelligence systems [theoretically feeding into DHS] and no money to connect them to one another or make them interoperable. 'There is nothing in the president's homeland security program that makes America safer,' he said."

14) The Bush administration has nothing to hide concerning the events of September 11, 2001, or the intelligence evidence collected prior to that day.

First Dick Cheney personally intervened to scuttle a broad congressional investigation of the day's events and their origins. And for the past several months the administration has fought a quiet rear-guard action culminating in last week's delayed release of Congress's more modest 9/11 report. The White House even went so far as to classify after the fact materials that had already been presented in public hearing.

What were they trying to keep under wraps? The Saudi connection, mostly, and though 27 pages of the details have been excised from the public report, there is still plenty of evidence lurking in its extensively massaged text. (When you see the phrase "foreign nation" substituted in brackets, it's nearly always Saudi Arabia.) The report documents repeated signs that there was a major attack in the works with extensive help from Saudi nationals and apparently also at least one member of the government. It also suggests that is one reason intel operatives didn't chase the story harder: Saudi Arabia was by policy fiat a "friendly" nation and therefore no threat. The report does not explore the administration's response to the intelligence briefings it got; its purview is strictly the performance of intelligence agencies. All other questions now fall to the independent 9/11 commission, whose work is presently being slowed by the White House's foot-

dragging in turning over evidence.

15) U.S. air defenses functioned according to protocols on September 11, 2001.

Old questions abound here. The central mystery, of how U.S. air defenses could have responded so poorly on that day, is fairly easy to grasp. A cursory look at that morning's timeline of events is enough. In very short strokes:

8:13 Flight 11 disobeys air traffic instructions and turns off its transponder.

8:40 NORAD command center claims first notification of likely Flight 11 hijacking.

8:42 Flight 175 veers off course and shuts down its transponder.

8:43 NORAD claims first notification of likely Flight 175 hijacking.

8:46 Flight 11 hits the World Trade Center north tower.

8:46 Flight 77 goes off course.

9:03 Flight 175 hits the WTC south tower.

9:16 Flight 93 goes off course.

9:16 NORAD claims first notification of likely Flight 93 hijacking.

9:24 NORAD claims first notification of likely Flight 77 hijacking.

9:37 Flight 77 hits the Pentagon.

10:06 Flight 93 crashes in a Pennsylvania field.

The open secret here is that stateside U.S. air defenses had been reduced to paltry levels since the end of the Cold War. According to a report by Paul Thompson published at the endlessly informative Center for Cooperative Research website (www.cooperativeresearch.org), "[O]nly two air force bases in the Northeast region... were formally part of NORAD's defensive system. One was Otis Air National Guard Base, on Massachusetts's Cape Cod peninsula and about 188 miles east of New York City. The other was Langley Air Force Base near Norfolk, Virginia, and about 129 miles south of Washington. During the Cold War, the U.S. had literally thousands of fighters on alert. But as the Cold War wound down, this number was reduced until it reached only 14 fighters in the continental U.S. by 9/11."

But even an underpowered air defense system on slow-response status (15 minutes, officially, on 9/11) does not explain the magnitude of NORAD's apparent failures that day. Start with the discrepancy in the times at which NORAD commanders claim to have learned of the various hijackings. By 8:43 a.m., NORAD had been notified of two

probable hijackings in the previous five minutes. If there was such a thing as a system-wide air defense crisis plan, it should have kicked in at that moment. Three minutes later, at 8:46, Flight 11 crashed into the first WTC tower. By then alerts should have been going out to all regional air traffic centers of apparent coordinated hijackings in progress. Yet when Flight 77, which eventually crashed into the Pentagon, was hijacked three minutes later, at 8:46, NORAD claims not to have learned of it until 9:24, 38 minutes after the fact and just 13 minutes before it crashed into the Pentagon.

The professed lag in reacting to the hijacking of Flight 93 is just as striking. NORAD acknowledged learning of the hijacking at 9:16, yet the Pentagon's position is that it had not yet intercepted the plane when it crashed in a Pennsylvania field just minutes away from Washington, D.C. at 10:06, a full 50 minutes later.

In fact, there are a couple of other circumstantial details of the crash, discussed mostly in Pennsylvania newspapers and barely noted in national wire stories, that suggest Flight 93 may have been shot down after all. First, officials never disputed reports that there was a secondary debris field six miles from the main crash site, and a few press accounts said that it included one of the plane's engines. A secondary debris field points to an explosion on board, from one of two probable causes--a terrorist bomb carried on board or an Air Force missile. And no investigation has ever intimated that any of the four terror crews were toting explosives. They kept to simple tools like the box cutters, for ease in passing security. Second, a handful of eyewitnesses in the rural area around the crash site did report seeing low-flying U.S. military jets around the time of the crash.

Which only raises another question. Shooting down Flight 93 would have been incontestably the right thing to do under the circumstances. More than that, it would have constituted the only evidence of anything NORAD and the Pentagon had done right that whole morning. So why deny it? Conversely, if fighter jets really were not on the scene when 93 crashed, why weren't they? How could that possibly be?

16) The Bush administration had a plan for restoring essential services and rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure after the shooting war ended.

The question of what the U.S. would do to rebuild Iraq was raised before the shooting started. I remember reading a press briefing in which a Pentagon official boasted that at the time, the American reconstruction team had already spent *three weeks* planning the postwar world! The Pentagon's first word was that the essentials of rebuilding the country would take about \$10 billion and three months;

this stood in fairly stark contrast to UN estimates that an aggressive rebuilding program could cost up to \$100 billion a year for a minimum of three years.

After the shooting stopped it was evident the U.S. had no plan for keeping order in the streets, much less commencing to rebuild. (They are upgrading certain oil facilities, but that's another matter.) There are two ways to read this. The popular version is that it proves what

bumblers Bush and his crew really are. And it's certainly true that where the details of their grand designs are concerned, the administration tends to have postures rather than plans. But this ignores the strategic advantages the U.S. stands to reap by leaving Iraqi domestic affairs in a chronic state of (managed, they hope) chaos. Most important, it provides an excuse for the continued presence of a large U.S. force, which ensures that America will call the shots in putting Iraqi oil back on the world market and seeing to it that the Iraqis don't fall in with the wrong sort of oil company partners. A long military occupation is also a practical means of accomplishing something the U.S. cannot do officially, which is to maintain air bases in Iraq indefinitely. (This became necessary after the U.S. agreed to vacate its bases in Saudi Arabia earlier this year to try to defuse anti-U.S. political tensions there.)

Meanwhile, the U.S. plans to pay for whatever rebuilding it gets around to doing with the proceeds of Iraqi oil sales, an enormous cash box the U.S. will oversee for the good of the Iraqi people.

In other words, "no plan" may have been the plan the Bushmen were intent on pursuing all along.

17) The U.S. has made a good-faith effort at peacekeeping in Iraq during the postwar period.

"Some [looters] shot big grins at American soldiers and Marines or put down their prizes to offer a thumbs-up or a quick finger across the throat and a whispered word--*Saddam*--before grabbing their loot and vanishing."

--Robert Fisk, London Independent, 4/11/03



Despite the many clashes between U.S. troops and Iraqis in the three months since the heavy artillery fell silent, the postwar performance of U.S. forces has been more remarkable for the things they have not done--their failure to intervene in civil chaos or to begin reestablishing basic civil procedures. It isn't the soldiers' fault. Traditionally an occupation force is headed up by military police units schooled to interact with the natives and oversee the restoration of goods and services. But Rumsfeld has repeatedly declined advice to rotate out the combat troops sooner rather than later and replace some of them with an MP force. Lately this has been a source of escalating criticism within military ranks.

18) Despite vocal international opposition, the U.S. was backed by most of the world, as evidenced by the 40-plus-member Coalition of the Willing.

When the whole world opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the outcry was so loud that it briefly pierced the slumber of the American public, which poured out its angst in poll numbers that bespoke little taste for a war without the UN's blessing. So it became necessary to assure the folks at home that the whole world was in fact *for* the invasion. Thus was born the Coalition of the Willing, consisting of the U.S. and UK, with Australia caddying--and 40-some additional co-champions of U.S.-style democracy in the Middle East, whose ranks included such titans of diplomacy and pillars of representative government as Angola, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Eritrea, and Micronesia. If the American public noticed the ruse, all was nonetheless forgotten when Baghdad fell. Everybody loves a winner.

19) This war was notable for its protection of civilians.

This from the Herald of Scotland, May 23: "American guns, bombs, and missiles killed more civilians in the recent war in Iraq than in any conflict since Vietnam, according to preliminary assessments carried out by the UN, international aid agencies, and independent study groups. Despite U.S. boasts this was the fastest, most clinical campaign in military history, a first snapshot of 'collateral damage' indicates that between 5,000 and 10,000 Iraqi non-combatants died in the course of the hi-tech blitzkrieg."

20) The looting of archaeological and historic sites in Baghdad was unanticipated.

General Jay Garner himself, then the head man for postwar Iraq, told

the Washington Times that he had put the Iraqi National Museum second on a list of sites requiring protection after the fall of the Saddam government, and he had no idea why the recommendation was ignored. It's also a matter of record that the administration had met in January with a group of U.S. scholars concerned with the preservation of Iraq's fabulous Sumerian antiquities. So the war planners were aware of the riches at stake. According to Scotland's Sunday Herald, the Pentagon took at least one other meeting as well: "[A] coalition of antiquities collectors and arts lawyers, calling itself the American Council for Cultural Policy (ACCP), met with U.S. Defense and State department officials prior to the start of military action to offer its assistance.... The group is known to consist of a number of influential dealers who favor a relaxation of Iraq's tight restrictions on the ownership and export of antiquities.... [Archaeological Institute of America] president Patty Gerstenblith said: 'The ACCP's agenda is to encourage the collecting of antiquities through weakening the laws of archaeologically rich nations and eliminate national ownership of antiquities to allow for easier export.'"

21) Saddam was planning to provide WMD to terrorist groups.

This is very concisely debunked in Walter Pincus's July 21 Washington Post story, so I'll quote him: "'Iraq could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist group or individual terrorists,' President Bush said in Cincinnati on October 7.... But declassified portions of a still-secret National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) released Friday by the White House show that at the time of the president's speech the U.S. intelligence community judged that possibility to be unlikely. In fact, the NIE, which began circulating October 2, shows the intelligence services were much more worried that Hussein might give weapons to al Qaeda terrorists if he were facing death or capture and his government was collapsing after a military attack by the United States."

22) Saddam was capable of launching a chemical or biological attack in 45 minutes.

Again the WashPost wraps it up nicely: "The 45-minute claim is at the center of a scandal in Britain that led to the apparent suicide on Friday of a British weapons scientist who had questioned the government's use of the allegation. The scientist, David Kelly, was being investigated by the British parliament as the suspected source of a BBC report that the 45-minute claim was added to Britain's public 'dossier' on Iraq in September at the insistence of an aide to Prime Minister Tony Blair--and against the wishes of British intelligence, which said the charge was from a single source and was considered

unreliable."

23) The Bush administration is seeking to create a viable Palestinian state.

The interests of the U.S. toward the Palestinians have not changed--not yet, at least. Israel's "security needs" are still the U.S.'s sturdiest pretext for its military role in policing the Middle East and arming its Israeli proxies. But the U.S.'s immediate needs have tilted since the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Now the Bushmen need a fig leaf--to confuse, if not exactly cover, their designs, and to give shaky pro-U.S. governments in the region some scrap to hold out to their own restive peoples. Bush's roadmap has scared the hell out of the Israeli right, but they have little reason to worry. Press reports in the U.S. and Israel have repeatedly telegraphed the assurance that Bush won't try to push Ariel Sharon any further than he's comfortable going.

24) People detained by the U.S. after 9/11 were legitimate terror suspects.

Quite the contrary, as disclosed officially in last month's critical report on U.S. detainees from the Justice Department's own Office of Inspector General. A summary analysis of post-9/11 detentions posted at the UC-Davis website states, "None of the 1,200 foreigners arrested and detained in secret after September 11 was charged with an act of terrorism. Instead, after periods of detention that ranged from weeks to months, most were deported for violating immigration laws. The government said that 752 of 1,200 foreigners arrested after September 11 were in custody in May 2002, but only 81 were still in custody in September 2002."

25) The U.S. is obeying the Geneva conventions in its treatment of terror-related suspects, prisoners, and detainees.

The entire mumbo-jumbo about "unlawful combatants" was conceived to skirt the Geneva conventions on treatment of prisoners by making them out to be something other than POWs. Here is the actual wording of Donald Rumsfeld's pledge, freighted with enough qualifiers to make it absolutely meaningless: "We have indicated that we do plan to, for the most part, treat them in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the Geneva conventions to the extent they are appropriate." Meanwhile the administration has treated its prisoners--many of whom, as we are now seeing confirmed in legal hearings, have no plausible connection to terrorist enterprises--in a

manner that blatantly violates several key Geneva provisions regarding humane treatment and housing.

26) Shots rang out from the Palestine hotel, directed at U.S. soldiers, just before a U.S. tank fired on the hotel, killing two journalists.

Eyewitnesses to the April 8 attack uniformly denied any gunfire from the hotel. And just two hours prior to firing on the hotel, U.S. forces had bombed the Baghdad offices of Al-Jazeera, killing a Jordanian reporter. Taken together, and considering the timing, they were deemed a warning to unembedded journalists covering the fall of Baghdad around them. The day's events seem to have been an extreme instance of a more surreptitious pattern of hostility demonstrated by U. S. and UK forces toward foreign journalists and those non-attached Western reporters who moved around the country at will. (One of them, Terry Lloyd of Britain's ITN, was shot to death by UK troops at a checkpoint in late March under circumstances the British government has refused to disclose.)

Some days after firing on the Palestine Hotel, the U.S. sent in a commando unit to raid select floors of the hotel that were known to be occupied by journalists, and the news gatherers were held on the floor at gunpoint while their rooms were searched. A Centcom spokesman later explained cryptically that intelligence reports suggested there were people "not friendly to the U.S." staying at the hotel. Allied forces also bombed the headquarters of Abu Dhabi TV, injuring several.

27) U.S. troops "rescued" Private Jessica Lynch from an Iraqi hospital.

If I had wanted to run up the tally of administration lies, the Lynch episode alone could be parsed into several more. Officials claimed that Lynch and her comrades were taken after a firefight in which Lynch battled back bravely. Later they announced with great fanfare that U.S. Special Forces had rescued Lynch from her captors. They reported that she had been shot and stabbed.



The president instructs naval planners in the finer points of three-card monte

Later yet, they reported that the recuperating Lynch had no memory of the events.

Bit by bit it all proved false. Lynch's injuries occurred when the vehicle she was riding in crashed. She did not fire on anybody and she was not shot or stabbed. The Iraqi soldiers who had been holding her had abandoned the hospital where she was staying the night before U. S. troops came to get her--a development her "rescuers" were aware of. In fact her doctor had tried to return her to the Americans the previous evening after the Iraqi soldiers left. But he was forced to turn back when U.S. troops fired on the approaching ambulance. As for Lynch's amnesia, her family has told reporters her memory is perfectly fine.

28) The populace of Baghdad and of Iraq generally turned out en masse to greet U.S. troops as liberators.

There were indeed scattered expressions of thanks when U.S. divisions rolled in, but they were neither as extensive nor as enthusiastic as Bush image-makers pretended. Within a day or two of the Saddam government's fall, the scene in the Baghdad streets turned to wholesale ransacking and vandalism. Within the week, large-scale protests of the U.S. occupation had already begun occurring in every major Iraqi city.

29) A spontaneous crowd of cheering Iraqis showed up in a Baghdad square to celebrate the toppling of Saddam's statue.

A long-distance shot of the same scene that was widely posted on the internet shows that the teeming mob consisted of only one or two hundred souls, contrary to the impression given by all the close-up TV news shots of what appeared to be a massive gathering. It was later reported that members of Ahmed Chalabi's local entourage made up most of the throng.

30) No major figure in the Bush administration said that the Iraqi populace would turn out en masse to welcome the U.S. military as liberators.

When confronted with--oh, call them reality deficits--one habit of the Bushmen is to deny that they made erroneous or misleading statements to begin with, secure in the knowledge that the media will rarely muster the energy to look it up and call them on it. They did it

when their bold prewar WMD predictions failed to pan out (*We never said it would be easy!* No, they only implied it), and they did it when the "jubilant Iraqis" who took to the streets after the fall of Saddam turned out to be anything but (*We never promised they would welcome us with open arms!*).

But they did. March 16, Dick Cheney, *Meet the Press*: The Iraqis are desperate "to get rid of Saddam Hussein and they will welcome as liberators the United States when we come to do that.... [T]he vast majority of them would turn on [Saddam] in a minute if, in fact, they thought they could do so safely").

31) The U.S. achieved its stated objectives in Afghanistan, and vanquished the Taliban.

According to accounts in the Asia Times of Hong Kong, the U.S. held a secret meeting earlier this year with Taliban leaders and Pakistani intelligence officials to offer a deal to the Taliban for inclusion in the Afghan government. (Main condition: Dump Mullah Omar.) As Michael Tomasky commented in *The American Prospect*, "The first thing you may be wondering: Why is there a possible role for the Taliban in a future government? Isn't that fellow Hamid Karzai running things, and isn't it all going basically okay? As it turns out, not really and not at all.... The reality... is an escalating guerilla war in which 'small hit-and-run attacks are a daily feature in most parts of the country, while face-to-face skirmishes are common in the former Taliban stronghold around Kandahar in the south.'"

32) Careful science demonstrates that depleted uranium is no big risk to the population.

Pure nonsense. While the government has trotted out expert after expert to debunk the dangers of depleted uranium, DU has been implicated in health troubles experienced both by Iraqis and by U.S. and allied soldiers in the first Gulf War. Unexploded DU shells are not a grave danger, but detonated ones release particles that eventually find their way into air, soil, water, and food.

While we're on the subject, the BBC reported a couple of months ago that recent tests of Afghani civilians have turned up with unusually high concentrations of non-depleted uranium isotopes in their urine. International monitors have called it almost conclusive evidence that the U.S. used a new kind of uranium-laced bomb in the Afghan war.

33) The looting of Iraqi nuclear facilities presented no big risk to the population.

Commanders on the scene, and Rumsfeld back in Washington, immediately assured everyone that the looting of a facility where raw uranium powder (so-called "yellowcake") and several other radioactive isotopes were stored was no serious danger to the populace--yet the looting of the facility came to light in part because, as the Washington Times noted, "U.S. and British newspaper reports have suggested that residents of the area were suffering from severe ill health after tipping out yellowcake powder from barrels and using them to store food."

34) U.S. troops were under attack when they fired upon a crowd of civilian protesters in Mosul.

April 15: U.S. troops fire into a crowd of protesters when it grows angry at the pro-Western speech being given by the town's new mayor, Mashaan al-Juburi. Seven are killed and dozens injured. Eyewitness accounts say the soldiers spirit Juburi away as he is pelted with objects by the crowd, then take sniper positions and begin firing on the crowd.

35) U.S. troops were under attack when they fired upon two separate crowds of civilian protesters in Fallujah.

April 28: American troops fire into a crowd of demonstrators gathered on Saddam's birthday, killing 13 and injuring 75. U.S. commanders claim the troops had come under fire, but eyewitnesses contradict the account, saying the troops started shooting after they were spooked by warning shots fired over the crowd by one of the Americans' own Humvees. Two days later U.S. soldiers fired on another crowd in Fallujah, killing three more.

36) The Iraqis fighting occupation forces consist almost entirely of "Saddam supporters" or "Ba'ath remnants."

This has been the subject of considerable spin on the Bushmen's part in the past month, since they launched Operation Sidewinder to capture or kill remaining opponents of the U.S. occupation. It's true that the most fierce (but by no means all) of the recent guerrilla opposition has been concentrated in the Sunni-dominated areas that were Saddam's stronghold, and there is no question that Saddam partisans are numerous there. But, perhaps for that reason, many other

guerrilla fighters have flocked there to wage *jihad*, both from within and without Iraq. Around the time of the U.S. invasion, some 10,000 or so foreign fighters had crossed into Iraq, and I've seen no informed estimate of how many more may have joined them since.

(No room here, but if you check the online version of this story, there's a footnote regarding one less-than-obvious reason former Republican Guard personnel may be fighting mad at this point.)

37) The bidding process for Iraq rebuilding contracts displayed no favoritism toward Bush and Cheney's oil/gas cronies.

Most notoriously, Dick Cheney's former energy-sector employer, Halliburton, was all over the press dispatches about the first round of rebuilding contracts. So much so that they were eventually obliged to bow out of the running for a \$1 billion reconstruction contract for the sake of their own PR profile. But Halliburton

subsidiary Kellogg Brown Root still received the first major plum in the form of a \$7 billion contract to tend to oil field fires and (the real purpose) to do any retooling necessary to get the oil pumping at a decent rate, a deal that allows them a cool \$500 million in profit. The fact that Dick Cheney's office is still fighting tooth and nail to block any disclosure of the individuals and companies with whom his energy task force consulted tells everything you need to know.



38) "We found the WMDs!"

There have been at least half a dozen junctures at which the Bushmen have breathlessly informed the press that allied troops had found the WMD smoking gun, including the president himself, who on June 1 told reporters, "For those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong, we found them."

Shouldn't these quickly falsified statements be counted as errors rather than lies? Under the circumstances, no. First, there is just too voluminous a record of the administration going on the media

offensive to tout lines they know to be flimsy. This appears to be more of same. Second, if the great genius Karl Rove and the rest of the Bushmen have demonstrated that they understand anything about the propaganda potential of the historical moment they've inherited, they surely understand that repetition is everything. Get your message out regularly, and even if it's false a good many people will believe it.

Finally, we don't have to speculate about whether the administration would really plant bogus WMD evidence in the American media, because they have already done it, most visibly in the case of Judith Miller of the New York Times and the Iraqi defector "scientist" she wrote about at the military's behest on April 21. Miller did not even get to speak with the purported scientist, but she graciously passed on several things American commanders claimed he said: that Iraq only destroyed its chemical weapons days before the war, that WMD materiel had been shipped to Syria, and that Iraq had ties to al Qaeda. As *Slate* media critic Jack Shafer told WNYC Radio's *On the Media* program, "When you... look at [her story], you find that it's gas, it's air. There's no way to judge the value of her information, because it comes from an unnamed source that won't let her verify any aspect of it. And if you dig into the story... you'll find out that the only thing that Miller has independently observed is a man that the military says is the scientist, wearing a baseball cap, pointing at mounds in the dirt."

39) "The Iraqi people are now free."

So says the current U.S. administrator of Iraq, L. Paul Bremer, in a recent New York Times op-ed. He failed to add that disagreeing can get you shot or arrested under the terms of the Pentagon's latest plan for pacifying Iraq, Operation Sidewinder (see #36), a military op launched last month to wipe out all remaining Ba'athists and Saddam partisans--meaning, in practice, anyone who resists the U.S. occupation too zealously.

40) God told Bush to invade Iraq.

Not long after the September 11 attacks, neoconservative high priest Norman Podhoretz wrote: "One hears that Bush, who entered the White House without a clear sense of what he wanted to do there, now feels there was a purpose behind his election all along; as a born-again Christian, it is said, he believes he was chosen by God to eradicate the evil of terrorism from the world."

No, he *really* believes it, or so he would like us to think. The Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, told the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz that Bush made the following pronouncement

during a recent meeting between the two: "God told me to strike at al Qaeda and I struck them, and then he instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did, and now I am determined to solve the problem in the Middle East."

Oddly, it never got much play back home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This was truly a collaborative effort from start to finish. It began with the notion of running a week-long marathon of Bush administration lies at my online Bush Wars column (bushwarsblog.com). Along the way my e-mail box delivered more research assistance than I've ever received on any single story. I need to thank Jeff St. Clair and the Counterpunch website (counterpunch.org), which featured the Lies marathon in addition to posting valuable reportage and essays every day; I also received lots of lies entries and documentary links from BW readers Rob Johnson, Ted Dibble, and Donna Johnson, as well as my colleagues Mark Gisleson, Elaine Cassel, Sally Ryan, Mike Mosedale, and Paul Demko. Dave Marsh provided valuable editing suggestions.

I also found loads of valuable information through Cursor and Buzzflash, the two best news links pages on the internet, and through research projects on the Bushmen posted at Cooperative Research (cooperativeresearch.org), Whiskey Bar (billmon.org), and tvnewslies.org.

But the heart of the effort was all the readers of Bush Wars who sent along ideas and links that advanced the project. Many thanks to Estella Bloomberg, Vince Bradley, Angela Bradshaw, Gary Burns, Elaine Cole, George Dobosh, Deborah Eddy, David Erickson, Casey Finne, Douglas Gault, Jean T. Gordon, Doug Henwood, George Hunsinger, Peter Lee, Eric Martin, Michael McFadden, George McLaughlin, Eric T. Olson, Doug Payne, Alan W. Peck, Dennis Perrin, Charles Prendergast, Publius, Michele Quinn, Ernesto Resnik, Ed Rickert, Maritza Silverio, Marshall Smith, Robert David Steele, Ed Thornhill, Christopher Veal, and Jennifer Vogel. And my apologies to anyone else whose e-mails I didn't manage to save.

What do you think?

- **E-MAIL** this story to a friend (or a foe!)
- **PRINT** this story in a more printer-friendly format

- [WRITE](#) a letter to our editor

City Pages E-Mail Newsletter:

Stay up-to-date with *City Pages*. Signing up is simple, and you can opt out anytime. Give it a try...

- [SIGN UP NOW](#)
- [SEE A SAMPLE](#)

Entire contents ©2003, City Pages Media, Inc. 401 North Third Street, Suite 550, Minneapolis, MN 55401 · (612) 375-1015 · All rights reserved. No part of this service may be reproduced in any form without the express [written permission](#) of City Pages, Inc. except that an individual may download and/or forward articles via e-mail to a reasonable number of recipients for personal, non-commercial purposes.

CITY PAGES: [Home](#) | [Work at City Pages](#) | [Contact Us](#)

OUR SISTER PAPERS: [Village Voice](#) | [LA Weekly](#) | [Seattle Weekly](#) | [OC Weekly](#) | [Nashville Scene](#)