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"O'Neill's book forces Bush to lie...again"

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By **Firas Al-Atraqchi**
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(YellowTimes.org) – Former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill's book has slapped the Bush administration with an explosive set of embarrassing charges, not the least of which is the claim that George Bush came to the U.S. presidency with one objective in mind -- the removal of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

O'Neill's book, *The Price of Loyalty*, written by Ron Suskind, claims that the first national security meeting of the new Bush administration in January 2001 focused on how to find a way to remove Saddam from Iraq. In a shockingly candid interview with CBS' 60 Minutes last Sunday, O'Neill defended his book; "From the very beginning, there was a conviction that Saddam Hussein is a bad person and that he needed to go. From the very first instance, it was about Iraq. It was about what we can do to change this regime."

In an upcoming issue of *TIME* magazine, O'Neill debunked the weapons of mass destruction claims against Iraq: "In the 23 months I was there, I never saw anything that I would characterize as evidence of weapons of mass destruction. ... I never saw anything in the intelligence that I would characterize as real evidence."

While at the Monterrey, Mexico 34-nation Summit of the Americas, U.S. President Bush defended his anti-Saddam initiative during his early administration days and claimed it was following in line with policies set forth by the Clinton administration.

"The stated policy of my administration towards Saddam Hussein was very clear. Like the previous administration, we were for regime change," Bush said.

Bush's statements, however, fly in the face of history; while the Clinton administration was seeking a regime change in Iraq, it had not initiated war or invasion planning. Indeed, the Clinton administration believed that U.S.-sponsored U.N. sanctions were effective in "boxing in" Iraq. The concept of "dual containment" was one envisioned by then U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright. The U.S. policy on Iraq was so enshrined in sanctions and containment -- not invasion -- that Albright would endure flak for her "it's all worth it" quote regarding the deaths of Iraqi children in the 1990s.

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Quoting a 1995 U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report that 567,000 Iraqi children under the age of five had died as a result of the sanctions, Leslie Stahl of *60 Minutes* asked Albright: "We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?"

Albright answered: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price -- we think the price is worth it."

In 1997, the newly-established Project for the New American Century (PNAC) was comprised of Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Jeb Bush, and Elliot Abrams. On January 26, 1998, the PNAC published an open letter to U.S. President Clinton urging him to unilaterally invade Iraq with utter disregard for the U.N.

In September 2000, the PNAC published a blueprint for U.S. foreign policy and strategy. The blueprint, titled *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces And Resources For A New Century*, went largely unreported in U.S. media, but is available online. (<http://www.newamericancentury.org/publicationsreports.htm>)

In January 2001, nine of the 18 founding members of the PNAC joined the Bush administration in high-level Cabinet positions.

The invasion of Iraq, and control of the Arab Gulf region, is clearly defined as a central strategy in the report:

"The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein."

The report pinpoints the U.K. as "the most effective and efficient means of exercising American global leadership"; that this ally play a vital role in the "fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theatre wars"; sees the U.N. as a weak, bureaucratic offset of the U.S.'s political will: peace-keeping missions are "demanding American political leadership rather than that of the United Nations."

The report goes on to indicate that U.S. strategic interests require that "even should Saddam pass from the scene, bases in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will remain permanently -- despite domestic opposition in the Gulf regimes to the stationing of U.S. troops -- as "Iran may well prove as large a threat to U.S. interests as Iraq has."

The report also sees the emerging unity of European markets as a liable threat against U.S. interests and subsequently, all industrial nations must be discouraged from rivaling or challenging the U.S.

The disinformation initiative to fool the U.S. public into believing that Iraq was an imminent threat began well before September 11, 2001, with carefully selected articles making their way into mainstream media. The proponents of this initiative include CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the

- ["U.S. media misleading public on Iraq casualties"](#)
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National Review and a bevy of syndicated columnists such as Ann Coulter ("let's invade their countries, kill their leaders, and convert them to Christianity"), Charles Krauthammer and William Safire, and political heavies like Richard Perle, Henry Kissinger, and former CIA chief William Woolsey.

The list also includes various "experts," military personnel, and Iraqi dissidents residing in the U.S. who believe supporting the Bush administration will make their lives easier in the New World. British Member of Parliament George Galloway has publicly referred to these Iraqi dissidents as "bought and paid for by the Americans" (BBC - September 24, 2002).

Will the O'Neill revelations spell political trouble for the Bush re-election campaign?

Democratic Presidential hopeful Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts believes the O'Neill revelations "call[s] into question everything that the administration put in front of us." He has called for an inquiry.

Former NATO General and Democratic Presidential hopeful Wesley Clark has also called for a full congressional investigation into the Bush administration's stated goals for going to war in Iraq.

At press time, the U.S. team of inspectors led by David Kay had been pulled out of Iraq and may never return. No weapons of mass destruction were found. The Danish find of shells thought to contain chemical weapons also revealed no WMD-related material.

No links between Iraq and al-Qaeda have been proven.

[Firas Al-Atraqchi, B.Sc (Physics), M.A. (Journalism and Communications), is a Canadian journalist with eleven years of experience covering Middle East issues, oil and gas markets, and the telecom industry.]

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